DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 323 HE 032 895

TITLE	Connections: Adult Learners and the Evolving University. Proceedings of the Annual Alliance/ACE Conference (19th, Saratoga Springs, New York, October 21-23, 1999).
INSTITUTION	State Univ. of New York, Saratoga Springs. Empire State Coll.
PUB DATE	1999-10-00
NOTE	226p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Empire State College, State University of New York, One Union Avenue, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-4390. Web site: http://www.esc.edu.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC10 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Academic Persistence; Acceleration (Education); *Adult Learning; *Adult Students; Certification; Computer Uses in Education; Cooperative Learning; Cultural Influences; Disabilities; *Distance Education; Diversity (Student); *Educational Technology; Ethics; Foreign Countries; Graduate Study; Health Personnel; Higher Education; Integrated Curriculum; Journal Writing; Learning Processes; Mentors; Multicultural Education; Nontraditional Students; Student Attitudes; Student Motivation; Teaching Methods; Transformative Learning; World Wide Web
IDENTIFIERS	Australia; Learning Communities

ABSTRACT

This collection of 38 papers has as its focus adult learners, and covers a wide range of topics including: electronic peer networks; workplace training (in Australia); health professional accreditation; students with disabilities; vertically integrated courses; balancing instructional modes through journal writing and student collaboration; on-line communities for distance learning; building technology skills in adult learners; distance learning opportunities and challenges; barriers to adult undergraduate education; "learners" and the learning process; strategies for evaluating on-line materials; educational persistence among nontraditional graduate students; Web-based distance learning graduate programs; graduate education; integrating multidimensional research and multimedia for conventional and nonconventional students; working with virtual students; ethical issues in academic mentoring; academic discourse and culture-centered context; quality citations and imposter sites; citizens forums; teaching with technology; adult learning and motivation in accelerated courses; instruction for culturally diverse students; quality learning and instruction in hyperspace; on-line orientation for new faculty; and student and faculty learning experiences with Web courses. (Most papers include references.) (CH)

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19th Annual
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An association for alternative degree programs for adults

October 21 - 23, 1999 Saratoga Springs, New York

CONNECTIONS

Adult Learners and The Evolving University

Proceedings

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19th Annual
Alliance/ACE Conference

Proceedings

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Adult Learners and
The Evolving University

October 21 - 23, 1999
Saratoga Springs, New York

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Utilizing a "Transformation Course" to Assist Returning Adult Learners

Lee Bash, Baldwin-Wallace College
Kristin Lighty, Benedictine University
Deborah Tebrock, Olivet Nazarene University

Introduction

Today's matriculating adult learner profile typically reflects an older student (25+ years) who is returning to college after a significant absence. Although students may draw heavily from what they learn in their life- and work-experiences, many see themselves as vulnerable and uncertain in their new environment. In short, adult students are often terrified about returning to school.

Background

Benedictine University, a liberal arts school in Lisle, Illinois, introduced accelerated adult degree learning programs in the fall of 1996 through the Center for Adult Programs and Services (CAPS). Courses were made available in segments as short as five-week modules. At the end of its second academic year, CAPS determined that it would strengthen its program by developing a Prior Learning Assessment Workshop for its students.

Although CAPS provided students the opportunity to apply for work/life learning experience credit, no system was in place to grant such credit. In order to create such a workshop, a task force was formed. Their objective was to design a course that was unique and sensitive to the needs of Benedictine University, so that they could provide guidance and oversight during the pilot phase. Course outcomes were broadly assumed among the task force members with an expectation that details would be worked out during the design process. Since the workshop would need to be in place by the beginning of the next academic year, the task force was asked to complete its task in three half-day sessions at the end of the spring semester. The members of the task force were major stakeholders in the CAPS program: chairs or directors for the eight majors offered, the adult curriculum coordinator, and director of adult enrollment management.

Design Sessions

Once the task force was assembled, it became apparent that even before creating a course to assess prior learning, other unmet needs of incoming students needed to be addressed immediately. Although adult learners draw heavily from their life and work experiences, the task force members agreed that many of their students were terrified about returning to school. Many new students did not understand their role nor did they display appropriate expectations regarding the school, the instructors or the curriculum.

As a result, the task force recommended creating two new one-credit courses for CAPS students: "Principles of Adult Learning" and "Principles of Prior Learning." They determined that the courses would be run in an accelerated format to model what the students would experience in other classes. They also spent most of their allotted time on designing the Principles of Adult Learning course since it would serve as the introductory course to assist students in their transition back into the classroom and better prepare students for the companion Principles of Prior Learning course. Furthermore, they decided to make it mandatory for all incoming adults who had been away from education for a significant time or who were identified as "at risk" academically.

The task force quickly determined the following overt learning outcomes:

1. to introduce and orient the new adult students to the Benedictine University learning program,

2. to help the student make the adjustments to adult learning and be better prepared for some of the potential problems likely to be encountered as an adult student.
3. to prepare the new adult student for the responsibilities they are about to assume.
4. to acquaint the student's family or significant others with some of the notable challenges they are likely to encounter while also helping to provide a support system for the adult learner,
5. to familiarize the student with the various opportunities and experiences they are likely to encounter in pursuit of their degree, and
6. to assess the student's current level of skill development and capacity.

In addition, the task force identified several covert objectives that strengthened their resolve to conclude their task. They expressed their belief that: a) higher retention rates, b) improved level of student satisfaction, c) increased student self-esteem and confidence, and d) higher level of cooperation and communication between academic affairs and enrollment management could all be accomplished with the addition of this course.

The Course

The task force envisioned a course to be taught in three classes spanning one week. It was to consist of five components: socialization, identification, assessment, development and application. The first two components were to be presented in a class with a compact schedule contained within three and one-half hours on a Friday evening. The following day was to feature eight hours of class covering the first through fourth components. The final component was to be addressed the following Friday evening in a three-hour session broken into three segments. The course was to be overseen by a team of two – an instructor familiar with the special needs and profiles of adult learning and the admissions counselor who had already established rapport with these students during the acceptance process.

Five sections of the course were offered during the first calendar year. As each component was presented, it was offered in an environment intended to increase the adult learner's comfort level so that he or she could become secure in expressing his or her views and confident with future applications in the remainder of their classes. Finally, the task force recommended that each student should utilize a journal as a method of helping to determine a final grade. The expectation was that this procedure would not only assist students through the introduction and development of journal writing skills, but that it would help provide immediate feedback regarding various assessments of the course, since the students were encouraged to write openly and critically about their experiences in class.

The Components – Socialization

The first component, socialization, is introduced on the first night through an informal "pizza party" in the classroom. Each student describes what has brought him or her to this point and why they feel completing a degree is important. This "testimony" helps reinforce similar motivations among the students while confirming the viability of their own decision. Furthermore, a previously enrolled adult student speaks to the class on the obstacles and successes she or he has encountered. Additional socialization takes place on the following day when lunch is provided for the entire class in the cafeteria. The students are encouraged to eat together along with the instructor and admissions counselor.

The Components – Identification

The second component, identification, is comprised of two disparate activities. First, the entire class takes part in a scavenger hunt. Each student is given a set of questions regarding important places and services on campus. As part of a team, they are given one-half hour to complete the task before reporting the information to the entire class. A handout detailing the "Ladder of Inference" is typically distributed at the conclusion of this exercise to illustrate how students can complete tasks efficiently and make the best use of their time without making specious decisions. The second part involves the administration of a "Learning Inventory." This enables each student to understand how and why she or he learns in a unique manner.

The Components – Assessment

Assessment, the third component, characterizes the beginning of the following day when students complete two assessments – math and writing. The math assessment is used to place students in the correct math class. The writing assessment is used in a pretest/posttest format – where it is intended that graduating students will be asked to complete a second version of the original task in order to determine growth, development, and sophistication of writing skills.

The Components – Development

The development component is expressed through lectures and handouts for the remainder of the day. The objective is to optimize the students' skills and learning outcomes through increased study-related activities (e.g., "How to Study," "How to Prepare for Exams," "The Significance of Pre-Class and Post-Class Assignments," "How to Create Good Essays," etc.). Topics that relate to personal development (e.g., "Good Time Management Skills," "Stress Management," "Developing Organizational Skills," etc.) are also integrated into this segment. Furthermore, additional time is devoted to helping students understand how the University functions and what are appropriate expectations (e.g., "Demystifying The Syllabus," "Know Your Catalogue," "Faculty Structure," "Using Evaluations Effectively to Help Improve Instruction," etc.). The final segment of this component deals with identifying how to obtain credit for prior learning through portfolio, advanced placement, CLEP, ACE, etc. This serves as the perfect opportunity to explain in detail the aspects of the companion course, Principles of Prior Learning, so that students have a clear understanding of expectations and outcomes and can make an informed decision regarding their own future enrollment.

The Components – Application

On the following Friday evening, during the final meeting, the last component, application, introduces the adult student to some of the important infrastructure and support systems of the University. Students meet with their academic advisor (many for the first time since their advising thus far is often administered by the admissions counselor), to cover course scheduling, program expectations and career planning. Students also take care of "housekeeping" issues by touring the library (learning the virtual library), gaining computer access, and being issued school identification cards and parking stickers. These final procedures help tie the adult student to the university by reinforcing their new status and help complete their transition into higher education. At the conclusion of these activities, a course evaluation is completed and a short "ceremony" is utilized to create a sense of closure.

Feedback, Outcomes and Overview

The student journals have provided rich anecdotal evidence regarding the effectiveness of this course. In their journals, students frequently articulate a higher level of anxiety than is externally evident or indicated in passing conversation. This willingness to display vulnerability has been attributed to a significant level of trust towards the teaching team (instructor and admissions counselor). Likewise, the overall candor and openness expressed throughout the journals have been considered particularly notable when reviewed by the task force.

Although the CAPS accelerated programs don't utilize a cohort model, this course was designed to provide each student with an immediate peer group and sense of belonging. In essence, the course provided students with contact points — not only with the primary team (instructor and admissions counselor), but the information, people and places to find answers on their own. In addition, it also created a strong bond among the classmates so that they continued to interact, often despite not being in shared classes. And finally, because the course design included members from both academic affairs and enrollment management, student received consistent information and advising.

Student satisfaction seemed to be related in many ways to the school's responsiveness to student needs, questions, and concerns. This course encouraged all students to voice their needs, questions, and concerns among peers, so that the group dynamic often amplified the sense of positive response and consequently, students tended to heighten their appreciation of the school in general. The course gave CAPS an opportunity to address individual needs during the earliest stages of the students' learning rather than several courses into the program when they become higher risks for attrition.

The design of the course is intended to draw students out in order to achieve a "transformation" in a relatively brief period. To accomplish this objective, all aspects of the course were carefully considered, starting with a very broad perspective beginning the first evening where students actually are expected to share and actively participate at a level where they are more likely to be comfortable. After the first class, the focus continues to narrow throughout the remainder of the class. The instructor actually doesn't dispense materials and topics for learning strategies until the midpoint of the class. By then, the student's confidence is typically significantly increased and usually obvious in the manner the students interact and participate in class. These concepts were directly accessed through a study supported by the American Association of Higher Education, The Education Commission of the States, and The Johnson Foundation, entitled "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Higher Education." The task force intentionally created a course that would reflect this good practice by: a) encouraging student-faculty contact, b) encouraging cooperation among students, c) encouraging active learning, d) giving prompt feedback, e) emphasizing time on task, f) communicating high expectations, and g) respecting diverse talents and ways of learning.

Since the initial classes were part of a pilot, extra attention was paid to the journals and course evaluations so that modifications could be implemented into the next classes. Ultimately, the course was refined to the extent described in this paper. Obviously, like any good course, this is a work in progress so that it will continue to be adjusted and modified to better meet the needs of this specific population.

Initially, the task force envisioned involving the student's immediate family and loved ones during the first night of class. The intention was to ask everybody to join together during the "pizza party," and give everyone the opportunity to hear the student's testimony during the remainder of the socialization component. Then, as an enlarged aspect of the identification component for the remainder of the evening, the original design called for the family and loved ones to receive a separate series of presentations emphasizing their role and the importance of their support as the students completed their degree. Because this operation required an additional layer of complexity, the task force decided to wait to add family members and loved ones until the remainder of the course was running smoothly. However, by the third section of the class, students were surveyed about how desirable they felt this activity would be and it was determined that during the second year, this feature would be added since student response was extremely enthusiastic.

Recommendations

The authors are convinced that this simple intervention may be one of the most powerful curricular supplements available to increase the impact of your adult program. Although such a course serves a dual purpose of orientation and primer for student learning, its format clearly energizes the students and empowers them in a dramatic and observable manner. It has also been carefully maintained to assure that a high degree of rigor is evident throughout its content.

Many adult programs offer some variety of this format – ranging from non-credit to 3-credit courses. Although the authors believe that the course as presented here represents a healthy balance and effective means of accomplishing our outcomes, we also believe that the real impact from this course comes from how it was designed to create a good institutional fit. In fact, much of the organic aspects of the course development have taken place because of the ability to respond even better to the unique needs of our students. Therefore, we would encourage schools seeking to implement this type of course to utilize the design we have provided here as a starting point but to make adjustments according to their own needs rather than see this as a "cookie cutter" solution for all schools.

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An Electronic Peer Network for Adult Distance Learners

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Regents College, a virtual university extending around the world, has created a Web-based environment, the Electronic Peer Network (EPN), that enables adult distance learners to support each other academically and emotionally as they progress through their degree programs. Students meet online to chat in real time, form study groups, provide encouragement, exchange information and resources, purchase and sell textbooks, celebrate achievements, and access an array of student services.

Introduction

As the number of adult distance learners continues to increase, colleges and universities are making more courses and programs available via the Internet. Administrators of distance education programs are finding they must consider carefully the specific needs of students who may never visit the campus providing their degrees. As a result distance education providers attempt to make available to distance learners services similar to those provided to on-campus students. These services include access to library resources, an efficient registration system, and advising services. More recently institutions of higher learning have begun to recognize the need of distance learners to interact with fellow students who, unlike on-campus students, do not have convenient access to peers for academic and emotional support. These institutions would like to create in distance students a sense of membership in a learning community that extends beyond the boundaries of a specific course or degree program. Regents College is an institution that has attempted to address student needs for peer interaction and membership in a learning community.

In May 1998 Regents College opened a pilot version of the Electronic Peer Network (EPN). The pilot version was installed on a Regents College Web server and consisted of real-time chat rooms, asynchronous threaded discussion groups, and a student book exchange. A searchable student EPN membership directory was added in July 1998, and additional components were added throughout the year. The pilot version of the EPN was sponsored, in part, by a grant from the National Center on Adult Learning (NCAL) for which a detailed report (Brigham, 1998) was prepared on many aspects of the EPN, including its effectiveness in promoting interaction among students (see Appendix A for the report abstract).

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to describe the Electronic Peer Network as it exists in August 1999 and the improvements planned for next version scheduled for installation October 1, 1999. This description includes the major components of the EPN, tips, and lessons learned. The paper concludes with plans for the future development of the EPN.

Institutional Context

Because the EPN was designed to meet the specific needs of Regents College students, it is important to understand the institutional context for which it was created. Regents College is a nontraditional institution that serves a population of sixteen thousand adult learners studying at a distance. The mission of the college is to advance the learning of students, primarily adults, who choose to pursue their education in a flexible, self-paced manner. Regents College has a staff of two hundred and fifty with an administrative headquarters located in Albany, New York. The College has no campus or classrooms.

Students earn credits toward their degrees in a variety of ways but primarily by transferring credits acquired at other institutions or earning credits through the Regents College examination program.

Over eighty percent of Regents College students reside outside of New York State in fifty states and several countries (see Appendix B for a profile of Regents College students). Historically Regents College students have not had convenient access to fellow students for academic or emotional support or for opportunities to engage in collaborative learning. In fact, many Regents College students have completed their degree programs without ever seeing or talking to another Regents College student. Data from a 1993 student survey conducted by the College and reports from student advisors indicate that students want to interact academically and socially, and that they believe this interaction would facilitate progress in their programs. Programs of study are offered in business, liberal arts, nursing, and technology.

Electronic Peer Network Members

Since the opening of the EPN about 160 students per month (2,000 per year) have joined. EPN members reflect the demographics of the college and the distribution of students across degree programs. The EPN membership currently has about 2,500 students: sixty percent enrolled in nursing, twenty percent in liberal arts, and ten percent each in business and technology. Enrollment in the EPN continues throughout the year at about five or six students per day.

Students use the EPN for a variety of purposes but most use it for academic (rather than social) purposes. They typically seek contact with other students in their programs. They make contact in number of ways including searching the student directory, visiting the real-time chat rooms, and participating in threaded discussions. Students also make frequent use of the other EPN components including the book exchange where they can buy and sell materials, the distance course area, the career center, and the study materials area.

EPN members also have the opportunity to use the EPN to interact with Regents College staff who facilitate weekly chat sessions and monitor threaded discussions. Interaction with Regents College staff is particularly important for nursing students preparing for performance examinations.

Electronic Peer Network Components

Following is a brief description of each of the components of the EPN components as they exist in August 1999. The overall structure of the EPN will change on October 1, 1999 when the next version of the EPN is installed on the Web server. (Note: Web pages for the new version are not currently available as they are under development.)

Web Site Layout/Organization

The current version of the EPN home page (http://gl.regents.edu) contains links to the following sections of the Web site: About the EPN, Academic Honesty Policy, Book Exchange, What's New, Career Resources, Chat Rooms, Discussion Groups, Directories, Distance Courses, EPN Photo Gallery, Frequently Asked Questions, Study Materials, and Bookstore. The home page does not differentiate between Regents College units (i.e., business, liberal arts, nursing, and technology). Therefore, all students regardless of the unit providing their programs share the same home page.

The next version of the EPN will be structured differently. The home page will have one button for each unit. As students come to the EPN home page, they will select the button for their unit and go to their unit's home page to access resources relevant to their programs. For example, the nursing home page will have resources not found on the business home page and vice versa.

Lessons Learned:

While students may sometimes want to converse with students from other units or programs, they also want to have resources relevant to their programs readily available without having to sort through resources intended for students in other programs. The layout of the Web site should accommodate both wants.

Registration

Students currently register for the EPN by visiting the main Web site for the college (http://www.regents.edu) and clicking on "Electronic Peer Network." At this point, registered EPN members may click on a button that takes them to the EPN home page, while new members click on a button that takes them to the EPN registration page. Students verify their status as enrolled students by entering their birth date and social security number. Students are then presented with a permission statement that allows the college to make available to other members of the EPN information that student supplies for the student directory, an academic policy statement, and an EPN electronic use policy.

The next step is to complete the required fields on the EPN registration form. Students indicate their degree program and one or more areas an EPN member may contact them for assistance. These areas range from academic subjects to emotional support. The information entered during the registration process becomes part of the student directory. In addition, students are asked a series of questions that indicate whether they fit the profile of an "at risk" Regents College students. (Students meeting the "at risk" criteria receive a different welcome letter than those who are identified as "not at risk.")

The next version of the EPN will have a similar but revised registration system. The revised system will provide students with more prompts and information so that user errors are minimized. For example students will no longer be asked to enter text to indicate their state of residence; instead, they will be able to select states from a dropdown menu. In addition, new fields will be created to differentiate students into categories that can be searched later.

Lessons Learned:

- To minimize request for technical support and to increase the accuracy of registration data, the registration process should be as simple and as automated as possible. Ideally, the fields in the registration form should be automatically populated by data (e.g., program and address information) from the college's student record database.
- Questions asked on the registration form should be carefully thought out as they can be used for a variety of purposes such as to identify a student or students willing to tutor peers in various subject areas.

Student Directory

The current version of the EPN contains a searchable student directory. Information contained in the student directory was obtained during the registration process. This information includes student names, contact information (including e-mail addresses), program of enrollment, and a list of subjects or topics students have agreed to be contacted about by other students. Student can search the directory by entering a word, phrase, or student name or by clicking on examination titles or subject areas of interest to them. For example, a student who wants help preparing for an examination in ethics can click on the name of that examination. This will produce a list of names (usually about 50 or 60) of students who said they would be willing to provide help preparing for the ethics examination.

The next version of the student directory will be similar to the current version. However, some of the choices of topics will be changed to better reflect student interests. If possible, provision will be made so that students can update the subjects they are willing to be contacted about so that the student directory will reflect current interests.

Lessons Learned:

- The link between the registration system and the student directory is crucial and should be planned carefully.
- The student directory feature of the EPN is one of the most powerful ways of enabling students to contact others with similar interests.

Chat Rooms

The current version of the EPN includes three chat rooms: the Regents College Lounge (for all students), the Nursing Lounge (for nursing students), and the Examination Lounge (for facilitated chats). Students have access to all three chat rooms and frequently login to chat with someone in their program or to participate in a scheduled facilitated chat with a Regents College staff member. A transcript of all chat room activity is automatically archived and is immediately accessible to students. In addition, edited transcripts of facilitated chats are available to students within a few days of the event.

On the next version of the EPN students will access the appropriate chat room for their units from their unit home page. Chat rooms will be added for business and technology students. However, access to a general Regents College chat room will also be possible from the home page so that cross-unit conversations are encouraged.

Lessons Learned:

- Choose chat software that loads quickly (particularly for AOL subscribers) and is easy to use. Avoid software that relies heavily on the use of Java.
- Choose chat software that automatically creates transcripts as students find transcripts very useful, particularly for a record of facilitated chats.
- The greatest difficulty students have in chat rooms is finding someone in the chat room when they login. This is a problem in need of a solution.

Discussion Groups

The current version of the EPN includes 52 asynchronous discussion groups. Twenty-four of these groups are dedicated to students preparing for Regents College examinations and four are used by students preparing for other examinations (e.g., CLEP Examinations). The remaining discussion groups consist of topics such as general interest groups for each unit, special population groups (e.g. military or international students), and support groups (e.g., Don't Drop Out and Coping With Anxiety). Discussion groups can be viewed by date, author, and categories (topics). Students use examination study groups in a variety of ways including to recommend study resources, to provide tips, to announce successful completion of examinations, and to congratulate each other. Some discussion groups (called "study groups") are used by students wanting to post their answers to study guide assignments and to share Web resources.

The next version of the EPN will also use threaded discussion groups. However, discussion group topics will be customized for each unit. For example, discussion topics for business students will be distinctly different from those for nursing students.

Lessons Learned:

- Unit specific discussion groups should be visible only to students in that unit.
- Less is more. Fewer well-chosen discussion groups will receive more activity than more less carefully selected discussion groups.
- Discussion software that reliably e-mails students when a new post has been made to a discussion group is highly desired.
- Discussion software should have the ability to automatically and reliably archive messages. Archiving messages cuts down on the cluttered look discussion groups with a high number of messages that have accumulated over time.

EPN Photo Gallery

The current version of the EPN home page includes a photo gallery consisting of photos of EPN staff, Regents College advising teams, and photos taken at a recent Regents College graduation ceremony (These photos can be viewed by the public at gl.regents.edu.)

The next version of the EPN will continue to have an EPN photo gallery. In addition, to staff and graduation photos, photos of EPN members may be added. This ideas was suggested by students and is currently under discussion by Regents College staff.

Lessons Learned:

- Students greatly appreciate seeing photos of college staff and of commencement. The positive feedback from students viewing the EPN photo gallery greatly exceeded staff expectations.

Career Center

Currently, the EPN features a Career Resources Web area where students may pursue career development. Information about self-assessment, career exploration and planning, and the pursuit of employment and graduate school is provided. Students learn about the Self-Directed Search (a career assessment tool) and how to identify transferable skills by taking an online survey. Comprehensive links are provided to information on job hunting strategies and on writing resumes and cover letters. Students also use the Career Center to gather information about graduate programs, test preparation, admissions, finances, and resources such as books and Internet sites for finding an appropriate graduate school.

Although this site was developed with a special focus for the Liberal Arts, the majority of the resources are universal to all degree programs. However, the next version of the EPN will include additional resources pertinent to each Regents College degree program.

Lessons Learned:

- This site is relatively new, and, therefore, little feedback has been obtained from students. Based on a demonstration of the Career Center presented to graduates at a commencement workshop, graduating seniors felt this resource would be helpful to them as they pursue new jobs or graduate school.

Study Materials

The EPN currently includes a button on the home page to access study materials. This area contains information about study packages and materials students can use to prepare for Regents College examinations. Students visiting this area also find new materials and software that they can preview, try out, and provide feedback to instructional designers.

The next version of the EPN will include a similar area for students to learn about and try out new study materials as they are being developed. Students visiting this area will be asked to give the type of browser and Internet provider they are using so that products can be developed to accommodate a range of browsers.

Lessons Learned:

- Students are willing and eager to preview and field-test products being developed for student use. They greatly appreciate being involved in the process and offer excellent suggestions for improving products.

Distance Courses

The current version of the EPN has a button on the EPN home page that is linked to a Regents College database of over 10,000 distance courses. This database is maintained in cooperation with Petersons, a publisher of educational materials for adult distance learners and can be accessed on the Web at lifelongerlearning.com. Regents College students use this database to locate distance courses and examinations that will help them earn credits toward their degrees. The next version of the EPN will also be linked to this database.

Future Development of the EPN

In a time of rapidly changing technology, it is risky to attempt to predict the future development of the EPN. However, it is currently envisioned that the EPN will eventually merge with a student services site serving all Regents College students. This site will contain a full array of student services available via the Internet. Students will be able to access their records so that they can monitor progress through their programs; they will be able to access library services, join workshops and tutorials, access a network of peers (EPN), and they will be able to customize their own Web site by selecting services from an existing student services Web site and installing them on their own home page. In short, students will become empowered to manage the student services in which they wish to participate and they will able to participate in a learning community of adult learners to the extent that they desire.

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Appendix A

Abstract: An Electronic Peer Network for Adult Learners

Final report

This study investigated the effectiveness of an electronic peer network in facilitating peer contact and interaction among adult distance learners, the types of peer interaction (academic, social, or academic/social) adult distance learners seek, the types of peer interaction that facilitate the progress of adult distance learners in their programs, components and features in an electronic environment that promote or impede peer interaction among adult distance learners, and the participation patterns of adult distance learners identified as "at risk" and "not at risk." This exploratory case study was conducted in two phases. During the first phase (July, 1997 to July 1998), two student listservs were established and monitored to assess student needs while the Electronic Peer Network (EPN) was being designed and installed on a World Wide Web site at Regents College, a nontraditional institution serving a population of 16,000 adult learners studying at a distance. Components of the EPN include a searchable student directory, a real-time chat area, and a synchronous discussion group, and a book exchange.

Findings suggest that an electronic peer network can increase interaction among adult distance learners, that adult distance learners desire primarily academic or a combination of academic/social interaction (as opposed to social interaction), that adult distance learners find asynchronous discussion groups, real-time chat (including chat transcripts), the availability of a searchable student directory, and e-mail notification of messages posted in discussion groups promote peer interaction. This study also found that difficulty connecting to an electronic peer network (or parts of it), lack of real-time chat schedules (and chat transcripts), multi-level threaded discussions, and software that is not perceived as user-friendly impede peer interaction.

Appendix B

January 1999

Demographics

		Headcount	%
Number of Enrolled Students		16230	
Sex			
Female		10375	63.9%
Male		5828	35.9%
Note Reported		27	0.2%
Race			
African American		1920	11.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander		747	4.6%
Latino		664	4.1%
Native American		144	0.9%
White, NonHispanic		11843	73.0%
Multiracial		175	1.1%
Not Reported		737	4.5%
Residence			
New York State		2398	14.8%
Out-of-State		13524	83.3%
Foreign Address		308	1.9%
Current Age (in years)			
	< 24	272	1.7%
Mean Age	24-29	1899	11.7%
40.5	30-39	5589	34.4%
	40-49	6054	37.3%
	50-59	2104	13.0%
	60 +	278	1.7%
	Not Reported	34	0.2%

The Saudi Connection: Confronting Pedagogical Assumptions

Judith Beth Cohen, Lesley College
Frank Trocco, Lesley College

Through case studies of women from Muslim cultures, we explore our perspectives, socialization, values, and pedagogy. Can these women develop their personal and academic "voices" and still honor their distinct cultural practices? Can student-centered and feminist pedagogies be oppressive to non-western students? Should faculty adapt their methodology when working with students from other cultures? Through discussion with session participants, we hope to develop academically appropriate guidelines that can be employed when working with students who inhabit disparate cultural worlds.

"I am a woman from a different place, where women are subjected to century long suppression, that has left its distortions and scars on our psyche. Don't you think that your demand on inner voice is extrapolated from a western model of culture? . . . Dominant cultures have no right to impose their models. Don't misunderstand me dear Frank, I just have to make a point. You provoked this voice, you got it." Ibdad

My (Frank) first experience as an academic advisor with a student from Saudi Arabia was a stereotypical culture shock. In an individual conference I asked Ibdad if books on her topic would be available at home. She told me that bookstores were few, that most of the books were in Arabic by Arabian authors, and that she would buy all of her books in Harvard Square before she got on the plane. The rest of our conversation went something like this:

Frank: "But you must have libraries at home?"

Ibdad: "Oh yes, but women are not allowed to go into them."

Frank: "What! You're not allowed to go into libraries? But aren't there universities?

Ibdad: "Yes, there is a university library. Women are allowed entrance on Tuesday evenings for two hours."

At all other times the only access Ibdad would have to books would be through male relatives who would have to look up titles at the library (there are no card catalogues outside the library), and then pick the book up for her. From an American student's perspective, these research limitations are bizarre and oppressive. After this discussion I stopped being completely naive about the transferability of the west's taken-for-granted scholastic assumptions around "quality research," "open education," and "scholastic freedom." I'd begun my own education on cross-cultural academic discrimination based on gender. Though I was no longer so unaware, I found myself consistently surprised and challenged as I continued to work with students from Saudi Arabia.

A number of these adult women have been completing degrees in the Lesley Intensive Residency Option program (IRO), an undergraduate, distance-learning program for adults. Nine-day residencies are separated by six-months of individually guided independent work. The IRO program allows the student and mentor/advisor relationship to nourish both individuals over the months as student work is followed by critique and review from the faculty advisor. When it comes to technology and texts, these often affluent women are more like our American students, who for reasons of poverty or location lack access. We often work with rural students who live in remote places by choice, far from libraries; many do not have e-mail and cannot use the internet. As we design studies with both groups, we cannot assume anything about resources. We must carefully plan every aspect of the semester, including where the books will be located and how the student will communicate with us. Are such studies compromised by these limits? Is it our obligation to compensate for scarce resources by loaning them our own books, or other such improvised means? The Saudi women have not only challenged our usual methods, they have provoked questions ut our progressive values and our feminist pedagogies. While their religion restricts the e of women in public life, our students are educational innovators, advocates for women entrepreneurs, eager to introduce more progressive practices back home. Yet, as Muslims, they respect their culture and do not advocate the abolition of traditional customs. As one management major put it: "The sexes can work in segregated settings and women can still work outside the home."

We've found that some standard pedagogical techniques, such as encouraging students to strengthen their writing "voice,"can become hazardous. I (Frank) spent the first three months of a semester, through mail and e-mail, encouraging Ibdad to stop writing reports about environmental education in Saudi Arabia, and move towards writing essays that incorporated her personal experiences and critical reactions. After hearing this advice over and over, she finally responded with the statement that heads our paper. I was taken aback, but what could I say? On some level she was absolutely correct. Using her voice, making statements about ideas, and developing criticism of (mostly male) authors, was not simply an academic challenge as it would be for the majority of American students. It provoked a deep socio-cultural conflict. Although Ibdad was not unaware of the change this implied for her, she warned me that it would take time (perhaps measured in generations) to work through.

We have begun to mull over the issues these students raise for us as progressive educators. Is it appropriate for us to have a subversive agenda, hoping they will advocate for changes in their county? Or is it more appropriate to respect their cultural identities and belief systems without threatening them? Many of our suggested readings deal with feminist issues that inevitably invite cultural conflict. Most of our students read Belenky et al's *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986) during their first semester and recognize themselves as the group that Mary Belenky has come to call the "silenced" women. Some educators might consider such texts essential, perhaps mandatory for opening the eyes of these "oppressed women." However, on an experiential level, it is not without trepidation that we assign such readings. It's easy to wonder: What kind of experiment am I running by introducing these ideas into an ancient and traditional culture which has no context for assimilating them? Do I have a right to present notions that are socially and culturally dissonant? How do these readings affect the way these students relate to their personal and professional roles back home? To further illustrate these challenges, we'll tell you about a few of these students.

Sulim's Story: Told by Judith

Sulim comes from a privileged background; in her teens she attended private schools in Europe. Now the wife of an international business executive, and mother of four children, she is also the founder of the only institute for the deaf in Saudi. Sulim came to Lesley to complete her degree and plans to go on to graduate school so she can contribute to the field of deaf education. She arrived at her first residency during Ramadan, while she was practicing daily fasts and prayers. So that she would not "bother others," she stayed at a Bed and Breakfast rather than the conference center with the other students. By her second residency, six months later, she felt comfortable enough to demonstrate her prayers before the entire community. With a sense of self-deprecating humor, she prostrated herself and chanted before an enraptured audience of students, many of them from working class Boston backgrounds who had never traveled farther than Cape Cod.

When I (Judith) considered the impact of her presence on others in the learning community, I wondered if she presented an alternative model for students who were not members of the dominant white culture? Mezirow emphasizes the importance of perspective transformation in adult learning (Mezirow, 1991) and my own work (Cohen, 1996) examines such transformations in the context of a residential learning community composed of peers. Sulim's ability to assume a dual identity, that is wear jeans, participate equally with men and function as an articulate group member of the group, suggests a fluidity of identity. This stance might be compared to the notion of "double consciousness" that W.E.B. Du Bois

(1965) argued was required of African-Americans. In this time of overemphasis on identity politics, Sulim shows us that we need not be exclusively defined by our status as women, minority, working class or abuse victim; rather we can accept one aspect of our identities without allowing it to reduce us to a label. She can move in and out, accepting her cultural status at home, honoring her religious practices, while also becoming an intellectual, an adventurer, and a powerful woman. This blurring and dissolving of boundaries is characteristic of both feminism and postmodernism. The work of such scholars as the anthropologist Jill Dubisch in her studies of a Greek religious shrine demonstrates that we can alternately, and sometimes simultaneously, position ourselves as different aspects of our multilayered identities (Dubisch, 1995, 19). For our working class and minority students, Sulim's example also tells us that one need not leave one's family or neighborhood behind when moving forward with education; that it is possible to remain rooted in one's community, and still participate in the larger world.

My (Judith) first impulse in working as Sulim's advisor was to feel compassion for her entrapment as a woman in a backward society, a sort of patronizing tolerance for her "diversity." In the course of her studies, Sulim explored the etiology of the nerve deafness that three of her children inherited. To compensate for the lack of services in her homeland, she had founded her institute. Her studies led her to very radical insights with profound implications. Despite the fact that she had several deaf relatives on both sides of the family, and her knowledge that she and her husband were distant cousins, it had never occurred to either of these two educated people that their children's condition was inherited, the result of consanguineal marriage. In her view, their condition was Allah's way of working; how would such knowledge have mattered? Learning about the history of deaf culture and the importance of sign language was another revelation. In her culture, the deaf were discouraged from using sign and encouraged to speak. Along with her degree, Sulim took home her understanding of the role of genetics in the etiology of deafness as well as an appreciation of the importance of sign language. Surely these are good things. Armed with her new knowledge she became a crusader for change. Reforming the treatment of the deaf is clearly less threatening and thus easier than changing deeply entrenched assumptions about gender.

As Sulim's faculty mentor, I had to confront my own biases and assumptions regarding a closed Muslim society. My intimate acquaintance with Sulim altered my thinking about the role of Muslim women in Saudi Arabia. Nancy Goldberger's (1996) work exploring just how issues of power and domination affect our ways of knowing helps me to understand Sulim's world view and to pay more attention to ways of knowing within cultures. Though I might revise my assumptions about Saudi women, this does not mean that I have become a relativist. Respectful of Sulim's culture, I can still uphold the superiority of the more "progressive" views of deafness.

Kamsa's Story (Judith)

Kamsa, a Pakistani woman and science teacher, had to return to school to get an American degree so she could be certified to teach in the states.Unlike Sulim, she does not wear western dress but the traditional sari and head cover. I (Judith) met her in a course called "Lives in Context,"a required beginning seminar for adult students which covers autobiography and biography. The final assignment asks students to write a chapter of their own autobiography and reflect upon it using the understandings gleaned from the course readings on historical, political and cultural contexts. For a woman like Kamsa, such an assignment required a huge cultural leap. Revealing personal details about her own life is a foreign practice, made no sense to her and was possibly against her religious beliefs. Yet she also respected professors and authorities and wanted to do what was asked of her. In peer editing groups, she heard other students writing about child birth, alcoholism and abuse. Appalled and embarrassed, she could hardly bring herself to talk to me. I explained that students could write a narrative about family customs, or holidays, or about leaving home for the first time. I said clearly that tales of dysfunction were not what was being asked of them. Even this degree of personal disclosure was difficult for Kamsa. Finally, she managed to write about growing up in India in a region where Muslims were discriminated against, before fleeing to Pakistan. When asked to reflect, or try to make meaning of these life events, she found this concept of critical reflection alien. My experience with Kamsa and other non-western students in the same class made me wonder about the hegemonic implications of a personal narrative assignment. Yet building academic studies from autobiographical issues has long been a cornerstone of my teaching practice and of the sort of adult pedagogy I have favored. Is it desirable to push women like Kamsa beyond their own cultural limitations, or do I impose my own culture upon her when I do this, as Ibdad charged when she confronted Frank?

This is still a matter I am thinking about a great deal and would like to hear others' experiences of working with personal narrative or autobiography with students from cultures with very different notions about the role of the individual. Is our emphasis upon each student as a unique person with a story, a hero of his or her own life, a social construct that advances human rights and human dignity, or is it a bourgeois invention we unfairly impose on our non-western students? My sense is that the residential learning community provides a much better context for cultural exchange than a traditional course format offers since the agenda is not driven by a faculty syllabus, and each student can design a study appropriate to her entering level. The dialogue that takes place informally during the nine day residential period surfaces many more issues than can be dealt with in a classroom.

Anna's Story (Frank)

Anna is an American nurse who has worked in Latin America and is fluent in Spanish. While living in Portland, Maine she became involved as an assistant case worker for Somali refugee families. These women were devout Muslims for whom the major obstacle to getting health care in America was their practice of female circumcision. Although initially aghast at what she perceived to be an archaic and patriarchal practice, after five months of working with these families, Anna came to revise her own notions and to understand both the complexity of this practice and its meaning to the women involved. Though she did not give up her own belief that female circumcision should eventually be eradicated, she saw that she must first view it from the perspective of her clients if she was to help them get the maternity and reproductive services they needed. Though presentations about her work, Anna brought these issues to the adult learning community. Anna's ability to "walk between the worlds" of two cultures, and attempt to find some ethnographic understanding in this highly contentious issue, did not meet with sanguine approval. The same students who welcomed Sulim's prayers, were horrified by Anna's seemingly compromised approach, and freely told her so. Although she did not condone female genital mutilation, Anna stood firm in her experiences and conversations with many Somali families, and her belief that simply being intolerant and outraged was not a compelling solution to a complex intercultural challenge.

Anna's stance as someone with a clear conviction who is, nevertheless, able to communicate with people from within their own framework, suggests a position we can adopt as educators. This is not an easy path to follow and involves the hard work of placing one's culturally valued assumptions in cross-cultural conflict. Maintaining this stance for any length of time can be enervating. However, we wonder if we should make room for practices that appear to marginalize, oppress, discriminate, or physically abuse individuals simply because they are part of another culture's belief system? Is every indigenous, ancient, religious, or primal practice worthy of respect, or even token tolerance? Are we doing our students a service by being agnostic about rituals, behaviors, or practices that trouble us?

As we constantly examine what we do from perspectives very different from our own, we can strengthen some aspects and challenge others. We may still use narrative and autobiography in our teaching, and assign feminist texts with the expanded notion that we will encounter narratives that challenge those we know. The perspectives of women like Sulim, Kamsa, Ibdad and Anna help us to reenvision our own practices.

Questions for Group Discussion

Should students with dramatically conflicting cultural assumptions, as compared to Euro-American mores and folkways, be treated differently in terms of scholastic expectations, research requirements, and academic responsibilities?

Should faculty feel any sense of responsibility in assigning these students culturally or intellectually provocative texts, writing, or research?

Is there a particular student who made you rethink your own cultural assumptions? What was the effect of the student on you personally and on the group you were teaching? Did you allow (or encourage) her/his perspective to become part of the group's analysis and orientation?

What guidelines can we come up with that enable us to uphold progressive adult pedagogies, without imposing them on students from very different cultures?

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Students' Educational Journeys Toward New Life Choices

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"Education in an open society has the charge of promoting personal transformation as one of its major aims." (Boyd and Myers, 261)

The members of this panel share the assumption that transformation is a goal of higher education for adults. We approach what that means, and how it may occur, from a several approaches and theoretical frameworks.

Julia and Emma:

Boyd and Myers use as a working definition of transformative education the following:

> A positive transformation is experienced as a clearly demarcated event which moves the person to psychic integration and active realization of their true being. In such transformations the individual reveals critical insights, develops fundamental understandings and acts with integrity (262).

And when the student participates in this process, the experience of transformation can be exhilarating for the student and for me. But my work with students increasingly revealed another process that, I suppose, could be called transformation but which I often experienced as grieving.

I am thinking of grieving in its classic sense as Elisabeth Kubler-Ross presents it in her seminal work, *On Death and Dying*. That is, the grieving person moves from denial through anger to acceptance of a loss. In our case, of course, the loss is not of a person but of goals, dreams, plans which may now need to be altered. I experience this with students frequently in the educational planning process and their decisions about concentration and studies to reach current goals. And it does not surprise me, given that our students are generally adults, returning to formal education after years of pursuing other life interests, interests which often led them down a particular path borne out of youthful choices, exigency, indecision or the myriad other motivations that move us to action.

I first became aware of this phenomenon with Julia, a student with whom I work at a distance. In our contacts, Julia struck me as a dynamic woman with a clear focus on her career and learning goals.

In our initial conversations, in September of 1997, she articulated her career goals succinctly: an Associate's degree in Community and Human Services with a focus on working with the adolescent population. To that end we began the degree planning process and selection of initial studies with an eye to studies that would provide a foundation in the behavioral sciences and adolescent behavior in particular.

However, Julia was working in an administrative capacity in a large and complex organization. To my knowledge, she had little to no experience as a professional in the human services field. So I suggested that she seek volunteer opportunity in a youth-related program to develop some understanding of the challenges she would face and the knowledge that would most support her plans and dreams, a suggestion that she accepted and acted on. During this time (Fall, 1998) she developed a first draft of her degree program, heavy in human services and behavioral sciences.

I still recall vividly that telephone call in January of this year. Julia's voice held sadness and anger as she told me of her realization that youth work was not what she wanted as a career. The volunteer activity had given her insight - "transformed" her, if you will - and led her to rethink her original decision.

So in Boyd and Myers' language, Julia experienced a clearly demarcated event which moved her to psychic integration and active realization of her true being. But this transformation was accompanied by a sadness evident in her voice and in the revised rationale essay that she submitted:

> I will be pursuing an associate's degree with no particular concentration. I will continue to work toward my goal of assisting others to strive to achieve their full potential...

And I believe that, while transformation was in progress, Julia probably did not see this awareness as such. Rather, she was needing to let go of a long held dream while having nothing specific with which to replace it at this point. My role in that moment was not as change agent but as sympathetic listener, affirming the sense of loss and lack of direction. As Kubler-Ross says, "Acceptance should not be mistaken for a happy stage. It is almost void of feelings. It is as if the pain had gone, the struggle is over, and there comes a time for "the final rest before the long journey..." (113)

Julia has submitted a revised degree program and rationale statement. It is a general liberal arts program for an associate's degree. As she progresses in her studies, she is recognizing some strengths and weaknesses in her intellectual interests. In her honesty and directness, she can verbalize these awarenesses. So our work together has an immediacy that is delightful. I fully believe that this grieving process for her dream, not deferred but cast off, will lead her to solid decision-making and, eventually, more focus to her program and her goals.

Boyd and Myers contrast this experience with Mezirow's paradigm which, they say, is

> ... rational and dependent upon the dynamism of the ego... In particular, we contrast Mezirow's notion of critical reflectivity with **discernment,** the term we use to identify the way of knowing and the form of its expression... Discernment is another paradigm or way of knowing that stands in contrast to perspective transformation's model of critical reflectivity. Discernment leads to insight, but not the reflective insight resulting from critical reflectivity, not the understanding gained by taking things apart, by analyzing and reducing them to their basic components. Rather discernment leads to a contemplative insight, a personal gained by putting things together and seeing them in their relational wholeness. (274)

Again, referring to Boyd and Myers:

> The outcome of transformative education is not primarily rational clarity but a commitment to an altered way of being with one's Self in the world... The exercise of discernment leads to new configurations of meaning which generate in the person an enthusiasm for new choices and even the courage to pursue them. (276)

Discernment, in their view, is characterized by three activities: receptivity, recognition, and grieving. In the **receptivity** phase, the person assumes the position of listener, opening up to receive the ideas, information and varying perspectives from varied sources. (277)

In the **recognition** phase, the person faces choice, sorts out varied options and begins to take ownership of an altered perspective. (277)

In the **grieving** phase, the person needs to come to terms with loss, which in our environment is often a prior way of looking at things, a long-held belief or vision or plan which no longer serves a purpose. Until this occurs, I believe that authentic transformation will not happen. The student may continue progressing in the program but may lack the inner satisfaction or sense of joy that often accompanies a true transformational experience. (277)

Emma exemplifies, for me, this discernment process.

She enrolled in the program in March, 1999. An articulate professional, Emma is a registered nurse working primarily in supervision in a Native American health center. She is Caucasian herself, but valued in the community due to her solid experience in health care. While the position carries with it many frustrations, she has a dual purpose in continuing in it: a real commitment to try to make a difference in the lifestyle of the Native American clients and an appreciation of the salary level she has achieved.

She came into the program with an Associate degree in Nursing supplemented with sixteen credits in liberal arts from the local community college. Our initial meeting began with her admission that, while she knew she wanted a Bachelor's degree, she was stymied as to the direction that it would take. One thing she did know: she did not want a Nursing degree at this stage. As we conversed, she referred frequently to her work as a supervisor. She detailed the variety of medical, social and economic problems that had an impact on the health of her clients. While her current position moves her away from direct patient care, there was an obvious enthusiasm when she talked of her administrative work, her growth as a leader, the opportunities for learning, in budgeting, for instance, and her intense desire to improve the health and awareness of the community in which she worked.

Emma had already done considerable work in anticipation of entering our program. She had gathered and reflected upon the data available to her, including her considerable experience. She had researched other college programs in the vicinity and consulted associates who had completed them. You might say that she had arrived at Empire State College by default! However, this was a default decision that she believed might, through its individualized approach to education, provide her with the tools and direction that would lead her to some clarity and decisions about her future direction.

In the receptivity phase, Emma expressed that she really had no firm idea as to the direction that she would take in her Bachelor's program. We explored her goals, her interests, her strengths. We discussed the pros and cons of the various concentrations she had considered. We looked at several options, including Health Care Management, a concentration with well-defined parameters. She was seeking information and open to new possibilities. The Health Care Management option led her to the recognition phase. She began to discuss how each of the component studies would serve to expand her knowledge base and build on her extensive experience.

At this point she engaged in the precise work of designing a degree program which would incorporate both health care management and human development studies. Her challenge here was to be cognizant of the College's requirements regarding introductory and advanced level courses and breadth of learning. There was enthusiasm here, a sense that this felt right. In Boyd and Myers' words, "...a person comes into an expanded consciousness that illuminates directions for actions which best fit the person's deepest yearnings and felt beliefs." (276)

Some weeks later our discussion led to Emma revealing how she had arrived at her career choices. Her true desire had been to enter the teaching profession. However, her family did not value a college education at this point. They urged her into a career field where she would need less education and in which she could soon earn money. So she attended the local community college nursing program.

Melancholy invaded our space for a few moments here. I would not call this a crisis but it definitely gave me a sense of her loss and of a mourning, however brief, for that dream unrealized.

Emma has since completed her degree program employing considerable analytical thinking and decision-making in dealing with the variables in the process. But she has focus and excitement in her discussions. As Boyd and Myers say, "Potentially, grieving becomes a transporting process through which the person may eventually arrive at a fuller, more transformed life." (278)

In their conclusion, Boyd and Myers propose that adult educators need to provide both seasoned guidance and compassionate criticism. The challenge for us as educators is to sense when each is appropriate.

Frank:

For close to thirty years, Jack Mezirow has developed, explained, and refined a theory of transformative learning that has had wide influence. Both his followers and his critics return to his ideas as the point of departure. Whatever their limitations, Mezirow's concepts seem helpful in explaining much adult learning and guiding adult educators who wish to foster transformative learning.

Central to Mezirow's theory are meaning structures (schemes and perspectives) around which people assimilate and interpret new experience. Meaning perspectives deal with theories and beliefs at a higher cognitive order than do meaning schemes. Transformative learning requires learners to alter meaning perspectives by engaging in critical reflection and, thereby, to achieve revised perspectives that are more functional. As Mezirow explains, "Meaning perspectives that permit us to deal with a broader range of experience, to be more discriminating, to be more open to other perspectives, and to better integrate our experiences are superior perspectives." (1990, 14)

Mezirow posits two areas of learning, instrumental and communicative. The first deals with technical skills and problem solving – learning to do. The second deals with understanding meaning and how we construct meaning. It involves recognizing what others communicate and searching for themes that we can use to fit the unfamiliar into our meaning perspectives. Hence, communicative learning requires open dialogue. Transformation can occur in both areas, although Mezirow tends to focus more on communicative learning.

Transformation of one's frame of reference occurs through a process which often follows an encounter with a "disorienting dilemma." In response, the person engages in critical reflection on his or her assumptions, participates in discourse "to validate the critically reflective insight," and takes action. (1997, 60) The learning may deal with perspectives related to self, society, the nature of knowledge and other areas. Adult educators can facilitate this process by providing resources and opportunities for effective discourse and feedback.

With this overview in mind, I would like to consider our work with students to see how we might identify learning that is transformational and consider what we do that supports such learning. As I think of my student, Frank, his experience seems instructive in this regard.

Frank was a student at the Center for Distance Learning. He was a police officer in a vacation area of a nearby state and had an A.S. degree in Law Enforcement. Now he wanted a B.S. to prepare for his next career step. Since he was about eighteen months from eligibility for retirement, he wanted either to be promoted within his department and stay longer or to leave and start another career in a related area.

Frank did not have access to e-mail or the web; thus his interaction was by telephone and mail. When he became my advisee, I sent him my new advisee letter in which I asked him to write in return, telling me more about himself and his goals. He returned my letter with a telephone call and said he thought we could just discuss these questions by phone. I commented that it seemed he'd rather talk than write, and he readily agreed. He had been successful in his previous education by attending class and participating in discussion. Extensive writing had, apparently, never been expected.

Discomfort with writing can be a problem for someone in a distance learning program, especially when they are using a text-based rather than a web-based approach. We spent considerable time discussing this issue, and for a while Frank thought about leaving the program and finding a more comfortable alternative. Since his life made class attendance impossible, he had to find an accredited distance learning program. He made some inquiries, and I encouraged him to explore the possibilities carefully and decide what would work for him. Eventually, he decided to stay with us and do what was necessary to develop his writing skills.

He did, indeed, focus on becoming an effective writer. He, of course, received feedback from me and from his course tutors. His challenge was to learn to develop his ideas fully and logically. Periodically he would tell me it was getting a little better; he kept his writer's handbook by his side and referred to it often. In his first course evaluations, his tutors indicated some stumbling at first, then signs of improvement. In later evaluations, tutors commented on the effectiveness of his arguments and the clarity of his writing. Frank talked to me about how he could really do this now; he felt quite confident.

In Mezirow's terms, developing writing ability is instrumental learning. For Frank, the initial transformation that I observed took place in this domain. But this new ability also affected Frank's view of himself and what he could do. His experience was similar to my findings in a study I did earlier, in which a group of women participated in a writing project and changed their views of themselves and who they were significantly because they saw themselves as successful writers. When Frank obtained his degree, he did get a promotion within his police department. By then, he had also decided he would go on for a master's degree and a doctorate and was thinking about another career in teaching.

Frank had experienced a disorienting dilemma: He was in a program that required extensive reading and critical writing to succeed, and he was uncomfortable about having so much depend on these skills. He explored alternatives and finally resolved the dilemma by committing himself to improve those skills. That decision, and the success that he achieved, enabled him to see a new range of possibilities in his life.

My role, and the role of the College, was, first, to support his search. When he was considering changing schools, I encouraged him to talk to others, and we discussed people and schools that might be helpful to him. It seemed to me that opening the range of contacts he had was important, even though the outcome might be that we would lose a student. My colleagues and I also gave supportive feedback on his assignments, so that he had the input for change and also knew that he was making progress.

Mezirow talks about the central role of dialogue in transformation in the communicative domain. Although Frank's change was initially in the instrumental domain, dialogue was still important. At Empire State, much of our student's work is independent study, and interaction is often limited to the instructor and the individual student. We can still provide opportunities for dialogue by encouraging the student to interact with others around meaningful questions, by discussing the conditions for effective dialogue, and by incorporating that experience into the total learning process. The College has also provided opportunities for dialogue through study groups and web courses. It is important to consider this need as we work with students throughout their programs.

In the end, we can provide opportunities for transformative learning, but the student will make it happen. Transformation depends on the learner's situation and readiness for change, perhaps more than on the educator's action. My hope is to continue to learn about the conditions necessary for transformative learning so that I can, indeed, support those who start the journey.

Mary:

Students working in an on-line environment find additional opportunities for experiences that expand consciousness, reveal critical insights, and develop fundamental understandings of their potential. At the Center for Distance Learning (CDL), web-based courses are asynchronous and while students have the opportunity to work together on special projects and participate in on-line discussions and chat rooms, they develop their own schedule based on course expectations set forth by the instructor and their own day-to-day schedule.

The student is required to take responsibility for their participation in the course, and that can serve as an opportunity to become more autonomous in the learning experience. On-line courses provide students an opportunity to develop their thoughts and ideas within a discussion framework that requires input from all students and thus provides a social environment for learning. The asynchronous format allows the student time to think about their level of participation as well as how they will establish their presence in the group. The opportunity to be autonomous in deciding how to present one's ideas and the role they will assume in the discussion format may be the first step in experiencing the transforming power of education.

A concrete example of this is provided by Mary's experience. She is a person with several disabilities and I was aware of this only because I spoke to her prior to her admission to CDL. When the course first started, she contacted me and said that she would be having some day surgery on three occasions during the term and was concerned about the group activities. She expressed concern that she would be able to meet the challenges presented by having to work with others on a project. She was clear that one of the reasons that she liked distance learning was that she could control the pace at which she worked on assignments. I suggested she might want to discuss this with others in her group and she immediately refused that option as she did not want to disclose her disability unless it was absolutely necessary.

As the course progressed, Mary, although she assured me she would need extra time if she had to work within the group, began to be one of the most frequent contributors to the discussions. Other students in her group began to refer to her comments and defer to her judgment. This was due in large part to her taking extra time to read through the comments of others and prepare her response. She commented to me on several occasions that working on-line was very time consuming, more so than taking print based courses.

As a result of her diligent preparation and the asynchronous nature of the on-line course, Mary was soon recognized as a valuable resource by other class members. Frequently, I would read messages from one or more students seeking out her opinion on an issue, project, etc. As a result, Mary became one of the leaders in the course and helped to shape what turned out to be a very positive experience for others.

This example provides concrete evidence of one student's experience. Due to the on-line format, it was not possible to view the changes as they occurred but change occurred nonetheless. In a later conversation, I complimented her on the high quality of her written assignments and interactions in the course and she remarked that this was her first on-line experience and it wouldn't be her last. It would seem that the positive experiences this student had gave her the confidence to move forward and continue to work on-line. It may have been that she was experiencing an expansion of consciousness (Boyd and Myers, 262) but it also may have been the effect of the process of reciprocal determinism. Reciprocal determinism is a component of the Social Learning Theory and according to Bandura (1977) within this process "lies the opportunity for people to influence their destiny as well as the limits of self-direction" (p. vii).

On-line distance courses allow distance learning students the opportunity to work with other students and test their ideas, values, abilities, and beliefs of who they are and what they can achieve. Developing confidence in themselves as learners, in their ability to learn what they need to learn and do what they need to do in order to be successful builds a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy. This is most important as

> Low self-efficacy tends to produce discomfort with the new and unfamiliar and overattachment to yesterday's skills. Higher self-efficacy makes it easier to move up from an earlier level of knowledge and development and to master new knowledge, skills, and challenges (Branden, p. 35).

A sense of self-worthiness and awareness of their ability to be successful in the learning environment is the base from which transformational educational experiences are born. As technology provides the opportunity for distance learners to work more closely together, the opportunities for positive educational and personal experiences will increase.

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Reinventing University Education for Workplace Training of Government Extension Workers in Australia

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Introduction

In the early 1990s the extension system in Australia was facing a crisis of identity and funding common to many extension systems in developed countries. In the state of Queensland, it precipitated the development of a new extension paradigm, based on the principles of adult learning and action learning. A partnership between the University of Queensland and the government department which runs the extension system led to the development of the autonomous Rural Extension Centre (REC) to train isolated extension staff in rural towns to implement this new extension paradigm in their workplaces. This provided an opportunity for the university to reach a new student market, and experiment with new teaching approaches. Over the six years of its operation, the internet has been progressively incorporated into more REC work, so that it now forms a core part of its training.

The need for a new approach to rural extension

In many western counties extension services began to face identity crises in the late 1980s. This was brought on by declining rural populations, the declining viability of many rural communities, changing priorities away from increasing agricultural production and a need to address chronic rural environmental problems. A shift to a 'user pays' philosophy in many governments meant that public extension services were under question. In some countries the extension systems were privatised, in others they were reorganised and in others they were transformed into different organisations.

The Australian extension system operates differently from the US Cooperative Extension Service (CES), although they have a common focus on rural production and environmental issues. Its primary aim is to improve the production and efficiency of Australia's agricultural, pastoral, forestry and fishing industries. It also has a major role in natural resource management and conservation, and an increasingly important role in rural community development. Unlike the CES, it has no direct role in Youth or Home Economics.

Extension in Australia is an activity of state departments of Agriculture, Primary Industries or Natural Resources, and these departments also conduct most agricultural research. Extension and agricultural research are funded by state government taxes and project funds provided by the Federal government and specific rural industries. Universities also conduct some research along with their undergraduate and graduate training in agriculture and natural resource management, but they do not employ any extension workers. Integration of the university and state research and extension systems is primarily on a project basis, such as for short-term collaborative research.

The role of extension and its professional standing reached a crisis point in Australia in the late 1980s. The first Australasian Extension conference in 1987 highlighted the new policy environment of extension and the decline in graduate extension training in Australia (Fitzpatrick, 1987). The conference helped trigger a major review of the Queensland Extension service (QDPI, 1990). One outcome of this review was the recommendation to form the Rural Extension Centre, to be *"established in association with a university, be located in a rural setting...and ideally be physically associated with delivery of a regional extension service"* (Coutts, 1994, p. 150). The centre was founded in 1993 with a staff of three and based at the rural Gatton campus of the University of Queensland. The university is the largest in the state and operated the only graduate extension training in Australia at the time.

Formation of the Rural Extension Centre and its professional training subjects

The development of the Rural Extension Centre is an example of a current trend for educational institutions to form training partnerships with industry and for industry to use training to implement new strategic directions (Steed, 1999). The centre was jointly funded by the University of Queensland (www.uq.edu.au) and the DPI (www.dpi.qld.gov.au) and provided unique advantages to both partner organisations. It provided the DPI with a means for rapidly training its extension staff in new extension paradigms and methods to support its new strategic directions. This training would lead to university-accredited qualifications, which would replace the in-house training subjects operated by its training section. (This section was progressively dismantled over the next few years). It also provided a means of using the training expertise of senior staff members with higher degrees in extension and years of practical experience. It provided the university with a higher profile in the rural community and a source of new students in a period of declining undergraduate enrollments. It built on its existing extension training expertise and academic reputation while also providing a large pool of highly qualified part-time trainers. The relative autonomy of the centre enabled it to quickly introduce innovative modes of teaching into a traditional university.

REC subjects are designed around the principles of adult learning (Knowles, 1990) with a very different format from other university subjects. Adults are recognised as self-directed learners who will learn what is relevant to them to meet their needs. All courses and subjects are based on the Action Learning Cycle (Kolb 1984). This involves a deliberate process of completing an action, observing what happened, reflecting on what this means and planning the next action. Each subject involves two residential training periods, separated by a workplace implementation phase. Participants complete the first five-day residential during which they develop plans for a learning project to implement in their workplace. They also begin keeping "Learning logs" using the Action learning cycle as a basis. After 10 to 12 weeks they return to share their experiences with other subject participants and receive feedback during the second two-day residential. The project is then written up and is assessed along with the quality of class interactions and learning logs. There is very limited use of formal lectures, with most teaching based on group discussions and exercises. In most subjects there are two trainers involved and about 10 – 20 students. The structure of the subjects with their workshop residentials and workplace learning projects meet the needs of full-time professional extension workers and their organisations while delivering a direct and immediate input into the workplace.

The courses introduced a new extension paradigm, which was threatening to many extension professionals. It emphasised social skills in group work and empowering rural communities to solve their own problems rather than the traditional extension approach of providing expert technical advice on technological problems. A core of 12 subjects was developed from a detailed needs-analysis of DPI staff and these could be credited towards a Certificate, Graduate Diploma or Masters degree in Extension.

- Adult learning in rural extension
- Marketing management of extension
- Empowering communication technologies
- Structured decision making
- Evaluation of programs and projects
- Group leadership and facilitation
- Rural community development
- The philosophy and practice of extension

- Development of workshops and extension packages
- Group processes and communication
- Managing and planning projects
- Rural Innovation Management

Over the six years the REC has been operating, the staff numbers have grown from three to thirteen. There is now a network of over 50 part-time trainers that help run subjects that are delivered in most states of Australia. Over 700 students have been trained and the Rural Extension Centre is now the main source of extension training in the country. Most course participants have been government extension workers, although increasing numbers of researchers and farmers have taken courses in recent years. Extension training has also been provided by the Centre in SouthEast Asia and Southern Africa. Three reviews of the work of the Rural Extension Centre have shown major benefits to students, their employers and rural communities (Fell, 1997, Rural Extension Centre, 1998).

Coping with distance in rural professional training

Most of the participants in Rural Extension Centre courses have the following characteristics:

- Involved in full-time employment in diverse forms of government extension work.
- Experienced extension professionals who are busy people.
- Geographically isolated in rural towns around Australia.
- Located long distances from the Rural Extension Centre.
- Work in relative isolation from other extension professionals.
- Generally good connections to electronic communication networks.
- Active users of e-mail and the World Wide Web.

These factors meant that students who come to the courses are highly motivated but long distances affect their abilities to attend subjects and to work on group projects with their extension peers.

Students came to expect to take an active involvement in their learning, and when this was not provided there was trouble. On a couple of occasions there were mass walkouts from subjects in which new trainers tried to impose a traditional university lecture format with tight control over the conduct of the subject. The expectations built up by this form of training had implications for the later introduction of computer communications into subjects.

Reviews of the courses found that most students lived within a 300-mile radius of the centre in southern Queensland. As a consequence, regular subject residentials were begun in the north and west of the state about 800 miles from the centre. Interstate residentials were also begun up to 2500 miles away from the centre to service the needs of this student population. There was still a need to overcome the isolation of students between residential components of subjects, and this was the primary motivator for greater use of the internet in training.

Piloting electronic discussion groups to support subjects

The integration of the internet into REC subjects depended on the speed of its adoption within the organisations that students worked for and the success of a pilot subject that used internet communications to enhance training.

The REC has led the adoption of internet-supported distance education within the University of Queensland. Its use within subjects depended on the degree of adoption within the DPI where most students worked. E-mail has been used by DPI extension staff since the mid 1980s, but it only became widespread in the early 1990s. Better use of computer technology in extension was identified as one of the first training needs of the REC.

The REC subject which focused on computer use in extension was used to pioneer the use of the internet in REC training. An electronic discussion group was set up within the DPI computer system to support interaction of students between the residentials of this subject in late 1995. Participation was voluntary and students were given individual help to subscribe to the group. There were many technical access problems, and less than half the students succeeded. There was little discussion with less than 10 messages posted, but it was shown to be technically and socially feasible. Over the next four years the ease of using electronic discussion groups within the DPI system improved, students were enrolled by the trainer rather than having to do it themselves, participation became an assessable part of the subject and the level of traffic increased dramatically.

Traffic on the REC pioneer discussion group was monitored in detail between 1997 and 1999. The discussion group acted as an extension of the culture of each class. Student enrollments were fairly constant and total subject postings increased from 130 to 240 over three years. Total postings varied from 1 to 39 per student. More than half of these were about the subject project work, with fewer postings sharing information about internet topics in general, and least postings of a purely social nature. Each first residential usually involves an active evening social program in addition to daytime training. It was interesting to note that the year with the least active evening social program was also the one that subsequently had the most active social communications on the discussion group. A couple of participants who made extensive use of the group for social comments greatly increased its traffic and fostered a wide range of discussions on internet-related topics from the practicalities of e-commerce for buying clothes to how to handle potentially offensive jokes. The discussion group that appeared to be most successful supported both the social and the work needs of the class.

Surveys of subject participants were carried out in 1997 and 1998 to determine their attitudes to the discussion group and the value of extending the concept to other subjects. A five point Likert Scale was used to rate the responses of 20 participants to eight different statements about the discussion group. Responses were given a numerical rating of 1(strongly disagree), 2(disagree), 3(not sure), 4 (agree) or 5(strongly agree). Participants were most positive about using the group to foster discussions between students (average rating of 4.0) and they believed that it had been a valuable part of the whole subject (rating of 3.8) and that the concept should be expanded to other subjects (rating of 4.2). They were least concerned about what messages to send (rating of 2.6), or feeling uncomfortable in sending messages to strangers (rating of 2.9). Students who had completed this subject requested that electronic discussion groups be set up for other subjects they were doing. The support of trainers was required and by 1998 there were five other subjects using such internet communications.

Customising electronic communications to the workplace situation

The survey of pilot subject participants in 1997 was supplemented with a group interview that revealed unexpected training needs. The DPI has been the leading Queensland government department in the use of e-mail and most subject participants had been using e-mail commonly for at least three years, with some for over 10 years. There has been little organisational training in using it effectively. The discussion group was seen to have been a valuable part of the subject, but problems with network access hindered its use, participants needed active support to contribute to it, and they were still learning how to use e-mail as an effective communication medium.

Problems of poor network access: Common levels of network access cannot be assumed. Small country offices and potential students in commercial organisations had particular problems.

- *"It was really frustrating in our rural country office accessing the network. I had a lot of problems, not necessarily with e-mail as such, but just getting it to work."*
- *"I am trying to get a friend of mine to come to the subject in February, but it is a major issue for him with the computer system that his company has and what the DPI uses."*

Getting connected and communicating are different issues When students must use workplace systems to connect to a subject discussion group, nothing can be assumed about it working automatically.

- *"First you need to be able to get on the system to post a message and then after that the issue is putting things on that are worthwhile, and things coming to you. So maybe there is a second phase. That first phase was very difficult for me and I was keen to move onto the discussion part of it."*
- *"I thought I was connected to the list and they thought I was away, and I though maybe they just haven't got anything to say."*

Assessment and balanced social and work support helped generate list traffic: Although users didn't necessarily like their participation being assessable, it did motivate them to get started. Other motivators were injections of passion and humour and something substantial to discuss; initiated by the list manager if necessary.

- *"I think that being assessable initially that gave us the motivation to put some stuff up, but it wasn't a big motivator. I can't believe it should be part of the assessment, because I think it would make participation too stilted and controlled and not really beneficial."*
- *"Those clever little games and humorous things have stimulated us to communicate. I hadn't been thinking along that mind-set, and when the work is getting a bit serious they just sort of break up the day a bit."*
- *"If you guys put something out there just for the sake of it, those things tend to die very quickly because it doesn't interest anybody and it's not picked up by the rest of the group."*
- *"If someone is managing this and it is not very active they have got a responsibility to some extent to put up some of the content and maybe generate some discussion."*

Learning how to cope with the volume of e-mail: Students regularly use e-mail at work and appeared to need help in learning how to manage it effectively and efficiently within their organisational context. This was a training need that the list exposed.

- *"People assume that they know how to use e-mail really well, but they don't know how to use it efficiently and they complain about having too much e-mail. You need to set aside a period of time to deal with it."*
- *"The trouble you run into is with the office computer system. If you've got a lot of e-mail it can fill up the system. I had 17Mb in my e-mail folder and you should only have 2Mb. One guy in our office had 100Mb.*

Learning the role of e-mail and its etiquette: The list participants were active, but naive users of e-mail who were still learning the best ways to handle e-mail conversations and records. The list could have provided an opportunity to learn e-mail protocols in a structured environment.

- "I did a feedback survey when e-mail first came in and they said they wanted to be able to see what they were getting. They didn't care how much we sent out so long as the title was right and they could hit 'delete' if they wanted. That subject line is really important."
- "People think that if they send me an e-mail it will stay there and there is documented evidence of you being told something. I really panic about the e-mails that I delete because people are always coming back and saying you must know about this because I sent you an e-mail.
- "When you are replying you just block the section you want to respond to and they write underneath the response to it."

Expanding into distance education and web training partnerships

Since the first use of electronic communications to support training in 1995, the REC has moved into a full distance education subject and is now collaborating with another university with a major distance education program to enhance its website to further support its training courses.

The first REC subject to be run in distance mode was "Extension Research Methods" offered in 1998, and it built on the experience in using e-mail in other subjects. A review of the first year showed up similar issues to those found in the earlier electronic discussion group studies. The electronic discussion groups enhanced the subject, but there was a need to train students in its use:

> *E-mail, I think is a technology that I am slowly coming to grips with. The exchange of contributions via e-mail for me was very useful. It provided me templates and some ideas of how I might present some of my assignments.*

Others found there were persistent connection problems and their mobile work patterns and fieldwork commitments made coping with e-mail communications difficult:

> *I hate e-mail. I'm out of the office and I come in and there are two hundred e-mails at the end of every week. Half of them are a waste of time. There are problems with the system I have. I can't even open a document to see if I want to read it. I have got to actually save it onto a separate drive, and get out of the system to open it. I really hate e-mail.*

A broad approach was needed by the REC to ease students in full-time employment into this form of distance education:

> *If those types of e-mail discussion groups happen with other subjects earlier in the peace then when it comes to do a distance education mode subject there may be a lot more freedom for correspondence to happen. You build habits.*

REC subjects have an important role in building familiarity with electronic forms of communication, so that students will find them easier and more natural to use. Greater use of them in other REC subjects would prepare students for distance education using this medium. In view of the organisational environment of many students it will be important to continue to assess their capacity to use electronic communications and supplement the subject matter with technical training as needed.

The growth in this area has meant that the REC is now developing a partnership with the commercial arm of the University of Southern Queensland (www.indelta.com) which has extensive experience in supporting web-based training. This will help expand the use of the internet within all of its subjects and to develop a wider range of services for its distance education students.

Conclusions

The Rural Extension Centre is an independent entity resulting from a successful partnership between a leading university and a major state government department. It provides workplace training for rural extension professionals. It has opened up a new student market for the university and provided the training to support new strategic directions for the DPI. The REC has pioneered the use of extension training based on adult learning and action learning principles that emphasise workplace applications of concepts learned in residential training. It is now the largest trainer of extension professionals in Australia and it has taken over many of the training roles that were previously done internally by the DPI. The REC has gradually shifted into greater use of the internet in its subjects, culminating in its first subject offered by distance education in 1998.

The REC training program has been primarily directed at DPI staff. The quality of their network access at work and their organisational e-mail culture have had a significant effect on the ability of the REC to incorporate the internet into its courses. It is too easy to assume that employees of organisations which actively use the internet are comfortable with the medium. The demise of the DPI internal training group has meant that there has been little staff training in e-mail use, despite its widespread use since the early 1990s. The REC will need to consider taking on an additional role of providing e-mail training as a part of student's participation in its courses. It cannot control the means by which its DPI students access its electronic services, yet it has contractual obligations to provide training to this partner organisation's staff. Basic internet training maybe required as a prerequisite for course participation as it expands into other student markets and develops more subjects offered by distance education. The lure of industry training partnerships and the distance education market is attracting many universities, but it can require significant investment in technical support and basic internet training in addition to providing subject content.

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Serving Adult Learners in Higher Education: Findings from the CAEL/APQC Benchmarking Study

Dr. Thomas Flint, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

What makes a college or university "adult learning focused?" Learn about an innovative study to determine what is at work behind the "best practices" at six institutions dedicated to the education of the adult learner. This workshop will report the findings of the study and attendees will discuss how the principles can be widely applied in higher education.

Introduction

Adult learners are the new majority on many college campuses. Research on adults and higher education tells us that adults learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning experience[1]; that due to multiple constraints there is a need for flexible times for services such as evenings and electronically[2]; and that the curriculum is most effective when it builds upon the life experiences and interests of the adult learner.[3]

But although we know how to help adults achieve a college education, many policies and practices in higher education are holdovers from the time when traditional students predominated on campus. The critical need to rethink practices in higher education is succinctly stated in one of the findings of the Commission for a Nation of Lifelong Learners: "Many current higher education practices are ill adapted to the needs of employers and adult learners. They pose barriers to participation, including a lack of flexibility in calendar and scheduling, academic content, modes of instruction and availability of learning services, among others."[4]

As part of its mission to make the benefits of learning accessible to adults throughout their lives, CAEL (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning) has embarked on a project to identify effective models for colleges and universities serving adult learners. This paper provides an overview of the first step of the project: a benchmarking study on "best practices" in adult learning.

Benchmarking as Research Methodology

To find and examine the "best practices" at colleges and universities for serving adult learners, CAEL chose benchmarking as the research methodology for this study. Benchmarking as a research strategy emerged in the 1990s, in the business sector. Benchmarking is "the process of identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices from other organizations to help an organization improve performance."[5] In a more meaningful sense, "benchmarking is the practice of being humble enough to admit that someone else is better at something and being wise enough to try and learn how to match and even surpass them at it."[6] While about 45% of U.S. companies have started using benchmarking,[7] the technique is barely addressed in the higher education literature. Benchmarking is being introduced outside of the business arena as a method for helping to create new ways of thinking. The methodology enables individuals and organizations to "think outside the box," and to compare and question, in a structured and analytical way, their own activities with those of other institutions.[8]

For this study, CAEL partnered with the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC), an organization experienced in conducting benchmarking studies in business, to plan and implement a year long study. Benchmarking is probably more adaptable to "higher education than other business quality management and improvement strategies because it is founded on the very skills which academics routinely practice — the skills of research, academic inquiry and critical analysis."[9] The resulting best practices of an adult learning focused institution can contribute to a model through which higher education institutions in the United States and beyond may reexamine their educational practices. The benchmarking methodology in this study consisted of a multi-step research process.

1. *Forming a benchmarking group.* The group consisted of three subject matter experts from U.S. and Canadian higher education institutions, representatives from CAEL and benchmarking specialists from the APQC.
2. *Planning the research project.* The group met numerous times to identify the scope of the project, to nominate best practice institutions to be surveyed, and to design the initial written screening survey.
3. *Screening survey to identify best practice institutions.* Sixty-three higher education institutions in North America and Europe were nominated as potential best practice institutions and were mailed a screening survey. The 33-item survey asked about best practices in the research areas of informational issues, access and equity, academic and social integration, and career integration. Thirty-three institutions responded by the deadline.
4. *Best practice site selection.* Subject matter experts analyzed the blinded survey answers and selected six best practice higher education institutions in a day-long process. Five institutions are in the U.S. and one is in Canada.
5. *Site visits.* While the screening survey asked what the best practices were, site visits to the six institutions added the "how" and "why" of the practices. An interview guide structured the day-long data collection with faculty, staff, and students at each institution. Transcripts of the interviews and discussions at the site visits provided a common data record for later analysis, along with individual notes and a multitude of documents and materials from each institution.
6. *Best practice findings.* The subject matter experts read and analyzed all the data and individually proposed best practice "themes." The group convened and further analyzed the data and themes and distilled them into an initial set of findings. These findings continued to be refined in two additional rounds of analysis.

Through the comprehensive benchmarking screening process, the following six colleges and universities were selected as "best practice" institutions:

- Athabasca University, Athabasca, Alberta, Canada
- School of New Resources, College of New Rochelle, New York, New York
- The School for New Learning, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois
- Empire State College (SUNY), Saratoga Springs, New York
- Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, Oregon
- Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio

It should be noted that a "best practice" institution is not synonymous with the "world's best" institution. Every institution faces challenges and strives for improvement in many areas. This is true of the "best practice" institutions in this study. However, in these six colleges and universities CAEL found the most comprehensively effective practices in serving adult learners. These colleges and universities offer inspiration and lessons to other institutions that strive to serve the fastest growing population of college students today.

Findings from the Benchmarking Study

The complex findings from the benchmarking study have been distilled into one overarching theme and eleven findings. The overarching theme reflects the centrality of the adult learner in all that a college or university does. The set of eleven findings are organized around the operational or structural elements of what CAEL calls an "Adult Learning Focused Institution of Higher Education." This paper offers an overview of the key findings. Examples from the "best practice" higher education institutions in this study will be offered at the Alliance/ACE conference session.

Overarching Theme of the Key Findings

The Adult Learning Focused Institution of Higher Education has a culture in which adult-centered learning, sensitivity to learners' needs, flexibility and communication drive institutional practice.

Adult-Centered Learning

A pre-eminent feature of an Adult Learning Focused Institution of Higher Education is an environment which is inclusive, supportive and respectful of difference and personal preference. The Adult Learning Focused Institution thinks, breathes, and operates with adult learners in mind. The operational structure is imbued with a belief system, values, and ethos that demonstrate the institution's respect for the central role of the adult learner in all aspects of the educational experience. Faculty and staff of an Adult Learning Focused Institution see and feel the unique culture of their institutions, in which the adult centered philosophy and purpose are paramount. There is a fundamental mindset that every employee should interact with adult learners on their level. Underlying this mindset is the practice of active listening to adult learners, and interpreting and translating what is heard into a response that addresses the learners' needs.

Meeting Learners' Needs

The Adult Learning Focused Institution deliberately acts in creative ways to modify practice in order to meet learner needs. The institution consistently revisits the following questions:

- What are the needs of the adult learner?
- How can we meet adult learners' needs?
- How can our academic and support services be more convenient for adult learners?
- How can we assist adult learners to meet their educational, career and personal goals?

Faculty and staff collaborate with adult learners across all segments of the college, enabling workable answers to these questions to emerge. The result is an educational experience and curriculum which responds to adult learners' goals and interests.

Flexibility

Flexibility and expectation of change pervade every aspect of the culture at the Adult Learning Focused Institution, such as: faculty roles, administrative structure, instructional modes, student services practices, delivery times and places, and day-to-day interaction with adult learners.

Communication

High levels of communication are necessary for effective functioning in all organizations, but in the Adult Learning Focused Institution it is a top priority. Extensive resources are devoted to facilitating one-to-one communication between adult learners and faculty, between adult learners and staff, among learners, and among faculty and staff because it is recognized that communication is at the heart of successfully meeting adult learner needs.

The themes of adult-centered learning, responsiveness to learners' needs, flexibility, and communication can be found, both explicitly and implicitly, throughout the benchmarking findings.

Mission

a) **The Adult Learning Focused Institution has a clearly articulated mission that permeates the institution and inspires and directs practice.**

The mission of an Adult Learning Focused Institution is clearly articulated through philosophies which greatly influence curriculum development, instructional practice, support services, organizational structure, policy and procedures, and which yield a high level of staff attention devoted to adult learners. Often coupled with explicit institutional goals and key performance indicators, the mission of an Adult Learning Focused Institution guides the institution in a common direction that is mutually shared and for which all are accountable. A steadfast commitment to the adult learner, and a belief that the institution is special in its focus on this group of learners, permeates the organizational structure and the individual behavior of staff and faculty. The result is a shared culture in which administration, staff, and faculty align themselves strongly with their institution as well as with professional organizations, collective bargaining units where applicable, or associations related to academic disciplines.

Decision-making

b) **Institutional decision-making at the Adult Learning Focused Institution is a shared responsibility that uses collaborative processes inclusive of faculty, staff and adult learners to create rapid, flexible responses to learner and community needs.**

While formal governance and decision-making structures may differ considerably from one Adult Learning Focused Institution to another, they have one common characteristic: decision-making is decentralized and widely shared among a large group of stakeholders which includes faculty, adult learners, staff, and community organizations and individuals. A decentralized decision-making process enables the institution to make rapid decisions and to tailor administrative responses to meet the needs of individual learners with flexible policies and practices.

The stakeholders are involved in the governance and decision-making process in a variety of ways, but central to their involvement in this process is an on-going series of conversations on institutional operations and structure. These conversations may take place via meetings, task group sessions, telephone calls or video conferences. Not only do these conversations lead to decisions, but they also build the organizational culture that plays such an important role at the institution - a culture with a shared sense of mission and responsibility for the operational success of the institution and the educational success of the students.

Admission

c) **The Adult Learning Focused Institution uses an inclusive, non-competitive admissions process to determine the best educational match for the adult learner.**

The admissions process at the Adult Learning Focused Institution is designed to be inclusive of adults with diverse backgrounds and abilities. Adult learners are viewed as partners in the admissions process, and both the potential student and the institution are expected to demonstrate capability and commitment in determining the "fit" between the adult learner and the college.

In seeking a degree program, the adult learner assesses whether the institution has the courses and services that will meet her educational goals, and whether the courses and services are sufficiently flexible and accessible to accommodate complex schedules and life situations. This information is readily provided to adult learners through web sites, print materials, one-on-one admissions advising with faculty or staff, and regular information sessions for prospective students at convenient times and locations. Word-of-mouth is also a common source of information. The Adult Learning Focused Institution actively provides adult learners with information to make an informed decision about how well the college matches their interests and needs. In this respect, a fundamental task of the institution in the admissions process is to demonstrate its capabilities to the adult learner.

Another fundamental task of an Adult Learning Focused Institutions is to assess the adult learners' academic goals and readiness to learn. The primary mode of assessment is through one-to-one dialogue between potential students and faculty, sometimes supplemented by basic skills tests or writing samples. Faculty explore adult learner interests and goals, previous academic experiences, current work and life situations that might influence their school experience, and feelings and motivations related to returning to school. Although traditional admissions criteria, such as standardized test scores or prior academic achievement, are sometimes factors in the admissions decision-making process, they are factors among many. The knowledge, skills and interests adult learners bring to the college experience are also very important and can often outweigh prior test or educational performance.

Educational Planning

d) The Adult Learning Focused Institution engages adult learners in an ongoing dialogue designed to assist them with making informed educational planning decisions.

The educational planning process at the Adult Learning Focused Institution is collaborative, flexible and has both formal and informal elements. It aims to assist adult learners with determining what their level of educational development is upon entry, where they are going, and how to get there as efficiently as possible. Educational planning is a key ingredient in establishing long-term relationships with adult learners and encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. It is a continuous process which begins with the initial inquiry and continues through graduation.

Pre-enrollment

The Adult Learning Focused Institution recognizes that the initial contacts between the institution and the adult learner are of critical importance. In the pre-enrollment phase, faculty and staff attempt to allay the anxiety which adults often experience at the prospect of returning to formal learning by discussing the prospective student's educational goals and demonstrating that learning acquired outside of formal settings is valued and respected. The Adult Learning Focused Institution works hard to ensure that all staff and faculty who have contact with adult learners treat them with respect and provide them with accurate information about the mission, structure and goals of the institution. This information is often used by adult learners to make an informal assessment about whether the programs and services will be the best "fit" in helping them to achieve their educational goals.

Prior Learning Assessment

The Adult Learning Focused Institution understands that adult learners often enter college with the mistaken assumption that the only skills and abilities which count are those gained from taking courses for credit. In reality, Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) serves as a foundation for educational planning at the Adult Learning Focused Institution. PLA is a process of defining, documenting, measuring, evaluating and granting credit for college-level learning acquired outside of traditional academic settings. Using PLA, the Adult Learning Focused Institution helps adult learners by:

- validating the worth of learning they have achieved on their own.
- identifying what they need to learn in order to achieve their personal, career, or academic goals.
- shortening the time necessary to earn a college credential.
- saving tuition by reducing the number of required courses.
- enhancing their pride and self-esteem for what they have accomplished as learners.
- enhancing their understanding of learning as a lifelong process.

An assortment of tools and methods are used by the Adult Learning Focused Institution to evaluate prior learning, including: standardized examinations, institutional examinations, evaluation of creative works, direct observation of performances, portfolios showing evidence of learning, and the use of recommended guidelines such as those developed by the American Council on Education that equate instructional offerings of business, labor unions and the military to equivalent college courses. Sometimes, courses and seminars are offered to guide adult learners through the process of identifying and documenting their prior learning.

Ongoing Educational Planning

The Adult Learning Focused Institution engages adults as active partners in the planning, delivery and evaluation of their own learning, and emphasizes and encourages on-going learner self-assessment. Some institutions require entering students to enroll in a comprehensive program planning course which orients them to the college culture and eases the transition into formal study. Such courses are part of an initial step in the student's educational experience. At the Adult Learning Focused Institution, ongoing advising and assessment are critical components of both the faculty workload and the student curriculum. Faculty relationships with adult learners are based on the creation of mutually respectful learning partnerships in which ongoing advising and assessment enables students to keep their coursework on track toward meeting their individual learning goals.

Faculty Roles

e) Faculty at the Adult Learning Focused Institution function as managers and facilitators of the learning process, not merely as dispensers of information.

Faculty at the Adult Learning Focused Institution respect the knowledge, interests and life-situations adults bring to their education. Faculty build upon these resources to develop learning experiences and are dedicated to removing barriers that keep adults from their educational goals. Faculty work with adult learners, staff, adjunct faculty, and local community resources to develop rich collaborative learning experiences. The result is that faculty do not limit themselves to the traditional role of the lecturer in their classrooms. Faculty are willing to act in a variety of blended roles which may include administrative duties, advising and teaching.

For example, faculty at the Adult Learning Focused Institution may:

- Advise adult learners about non-traditional curriculum options, including how the curriculum works and how it can be designed for the adult learner's particular interests and goals.
- Help students develop learning plans.
- Teach classes and schedule advising sessions at times convenient to their students, including evenings and weekends.
- Evaluate prior learning.
- Serve as "translator," liaison, and advocate for their students, helping them with administrative questions, working out administrative glitches, and assisting them with access to student services.

Teaching-Learning Process

f) The teaching-learning process at the Adult Learning Focused Institution actively involves adult learners in collaborative learning experiences typically centered around their lives and work.

The ethos of adult centeredness at the Adult Learning Focused Institution is a characteristic that strongly influences the teaching-learning process, which is personalized, active, collaborative, experiential and built on theories, philosophies and best practices of adult learning. Courses and learning opportunities start with the premise that adult students want to learn, are goal-oriented, and are eager to connect their new learning with skills and knowledge applicable to their jobs, or which are needed for the careers they seek to enter. There is a high degree of interaction among adult learners, and between learners and faculty, workplaces and communities. These interactions are stimulated by teaching-learning practices that involve dialogue and problem-based learning. The class-size of group courses is kept small to maximize student involvement in the learning process. Students are viewed as co-creators of knowledge. Therefore, learning experiences and projects in courses at the institution are often designed in cooperation with students and directly relate to the student's work and personal world.

Emphasis on experiential learning and the integration of theory and application is reflected in a variety of teaching-learning practices at the Adult Learning Focused Institution, such as: required internships, work/life related class projects, service learning, use of adjunct faculty employed in fields about which they teach, and learning contracts focusing on experiential and/or work related topics of personal interest to the students. Such practices enhance learning, enrich the course experiences, and complement the expertise of faculty.

Curriculum Design and Instructional Delivery

g) The curriculum and instructional delivery at the Adult Learning Focused Institution are designed to help adult learners meet their learning goals.

Curriculum Design

Creating a curriculum which ensures that students study a wide range of subject matter while also developing a focused set of individualized learning goals is something at which the Adult Learning Focused Institution excels. The curriculum at the institution is specifically designed to meet the individual needs of a diverse population of adult learners. Both fixed and flexible components are offered which help adult learners to clearly identify their individual learning needs and goals. For example, curriculum at the Adult Learning Focused Institution may include:

- Informal and formal assessment procedures
- Identification and evaluation of prior learning
- Development of individualized learning plans which enable adult learners to track their progress in completing the curriculum
- Options that allow the curriculum to be easily adapted for each individual student or for groups of students with common learning needs and goals

Instructional Delivery

How instruction is delivered greatly influences the learning decisions adult learners make in their short- and long-term educational planning, including designing an individualized curriculum. If courses aren't offered in an accessible mode, adult learners will seek out other courses that are.

At the Adult Learning Focused Institution, flexibility and convenience are the hallmarks of instructional delivery, which is designed to remove time and place barriers. The guiding perspective is that college-level learning and instruction can take place any time, any way, anywhere. To maximize this flexibility and convenience, the Adult Learning Focused Institution employs diverse modes of instruction, a variety of schedules, and multiple locations to access education. Several options are provided for students to access learning through learning contracts, distance education courses, cross registration at other colleges and universities, correspondence courses, group courses, and tutorials. For example, at some institutions, group courses are offered in multiple time formats, including day, evening, and weekends to accommodate different student schedules, and in a variety of geographic locations convenient to students.

Student Services

h) **The Adult Learning Focused Institution makes student services easily accessible and convenient through a variety of access points.**

"Student-first" is the theme of student services at the Adult Learning Focused Institution. Student services are characterized by convenience and accessibility and, like instructional delivery, are designed to minimize or remove time and place barriers. They are provided through a variety of access points – in-person, telephone, web-sites, print, and e-mail. Students can often obtain service for registration, admission and advising, tutoring, faculty advising, program information, and transcripts through any one of these access points. At some institutions, personal counseling is also provided by telephone during both days and evenings to accommodate student schedules.

Adjunct Faculty

i) **The Adjunct faculty at the Adult Learning Focused Institution is valued for their connections to workplaces and communities; and for providing an accessible and flexible curriculum.**

The adjunct faculty is responsible primarily for instruction, for designing and implementing appropriate learning environments, and for evaluating adult learners. Their roles and responsibilities are not as comprehensive as full-time faculty because their primary work is with the businesses, agencies, unions, and volunteer organizations in the local community. In this way, they serve as a vital link between the institution and the community.

The presence of adjunct faculty is common at most colleges and universities. These faculty enable the institution to rapidly create alternative curriculum paths to meet the learning needs of a changing student population. However, at the Adult Learning Focused Institution these faculty members are particularly valued for their professional expertise and connections to the workplace. Because adult learners have clear career objectives for their education and are generally rooted in the community in which they take classes, adult learners rely on these faculty members to learn "how it really is" in their career field and to help them make professional contacts. The adjunct faculty often is able to develop community-based course options in which students have the opportunity to study with practitioners in their field of interest.

Information Technology

j) **The Adult Learning Focused Institution focuses information technology on enriching one-to-one communication and providing flexible and timely education and administrative services that meet the needs of adult learners.**

Advances in information technology have made it possible for higher education institutions to greatly expand the level of services they can offer to prospective and enrolled students. The Adult Learning Focused Institution ensures that information technologies do not become ends in themselves but are used to provide adult learners with flexible and timely education and administrative services focused on meeting the learners' needs. The institution sees technology as another venue for enriching the dialogue between the adult learner and faculty and administration. This does not necessarily require "cutting edge" technology, but investment in appropriate, accessible technology.

Institutional web-sites and e-mail enable adult learners to link directly with their college at any time and at virtually any place to obtain information needed for educational planning and decision-making, or to provide feedback and ask questions regarding the institution's programs and services. It also allows adult learners to keep in close contact with faculty and receive timely answers to questions.

Interestingly, in this study the most valuable technology for communication between the adult learner and the institution is the telephone. When using the telephone, the administrative staff is careful to minimize the use of voice mail and answering services. In general, the six institutions strive to have each call answered in person. When this is not possible, most institutions try to respond to voice mail messages within 24 hours and alert the caller to other options for obtaining information. The telephone is thus a critical communication tool for faculty and adult learners for activities ranging from simple questions of clarification to on-going mentoring and tutoring.

Affordability

k) The Adult Learning Focused Institution makes continuous and deliberate efforts to simultaneously ensure the affordability, accessibility and quality of educational degrees and programs.

While there is an ongoing challenge to balance low cost with high access and quality, the goal of affordability visibly influences most decisions at the Adult Learning Focused Institution. Despite the high degree of ongoing, one-to-one communication and curriculum adaptation inherent in adult learner centered instructional practices and services, tuition and fees remain affordable. It appears to be a myth that large classes and standardized systems are necessary to maintain an economy of scale in order to minimize costs. Many Adult Learning Focused Institutions have demonstrated the affordability of the "student-first" approach to higher education.

Although successful at keeping education affordable, the Adult Learning Focused Institution does experience financial pressure. Often the response to this pressure is to increasingly diversify funding sources. There is a constant effort to be creative about ways to keep costs low for students, including multiple avenues for paying tuition, linkages to community resources, and reliance upon adjunct faculty. For example, most adult learners are employed, and many work in businesses and organizations that subsidize tuition. The Adult Learning Focused Institution actively encourages adult learners to utilize employer-paid tuition benefits. In addition, the Adult Learning Focused Institution partners with businesses and organizations to provide customized, work- or career-related education to adult learners.

Implications and Next Steps

The final phase of benchmarking is to adapt one's findings to another institutional setting with the goal of process improvement. CAEL undertook this benchmarking study with the aim of fostering quality improvement among institutions of higher education because we believe they will benefit from the discovery and dissemination of those policies and practices that assure adult learners accessible and effective education.

In the next step of this project CAEL is considering what has been learned through this study, set in the context of:

- How these empirically derived findings compare with earlier concept-driven principles of good practice such as *Principles of Good Practice for Alternative and External Degree Programs for Adults* from The Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials, American Council on Education and the Alliance and Focus on Adults from The American Council on Education
- How these findings differed from some expectations of the project team, and why those expectations matter.
- How these findings trigger additional issues, and why those issues prompt important follow-up questions.

This study thus lays the groundwork for further work which will explore the expectations and issues raised through the benchmarking process and identify principles of effectiveness of the Adult Learning Focused Institution of Higher Education.

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An On-line Course in "Accreditation" for Health Professionals

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As adult educators, we already have expertise in certain subject matter and in facilitating learning. Ever advancing information technologies challenge us to advance as well in applying our expertise in new ways to help adults learn. We have exciting (and sometimes intimidating) new tools to use in pursuing our work. In fact, some who are particularly enchanted with the tools and sophisticated in their use must be careful not to let the tools themselves become the *raison d'etre*. Yet others of us are novices poised on the brink of our first application of tools such as the Web, and by now we are certainly ready to jump, but do we jump backward into the diminishing folds of the Luddites? Or forward toward what is for us the rapidly evolving, relative unknown? Nudging us to jump forward are our colleagues who have already been to the other side of Web-course development and have returned to tell of their adventures and misadventures. In various ways, these colleagues provide the scaffolding we need to climb to new heights in our use of cyberspace.

The starting place for our dialogue today is the experience of colleague Charles Ford in the development of a Web course in "Accreditation" for health professionals at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), the newest member of Florida's state system of higher education and a university whose stated goal is to develop one quarter of its enrollment in distance education. FGCU's mission and its commitment to distance education provide a fertile ground for the development of new programs, new courses and new delivery systems.

Ford's reasons for accepting FGCU's invitation to get involved in developing and teaching a Web course include the following:

1. In the convergence of access, lifelong learning and technology, "much of the academic leadership seems to be planning for the last war, not the current one." (Green, p.11) If faculty really believe that instruction is their purview, then faculty must assume some of the burden of this leadership.
2. Recently, in its annual request for members' renewal dues, the American Association of University Professors listed issues confronting college teachers. Included in the list is "the intrusion of the interests of commerce in the development of distance learning." (Orlans, p. 9) The fact that commerce is certainly interested in the huge market for distance learning is yet another reason for faculty interest and involvement.

Typically, just as Professor Ford wanted to teach a Web course, he also had some reservations about his own ability in that regard. Ford was aware of difficult issues associated with on-line delivery, particularly the issue of evaluation. Another concern was the appropriateness or effectiveness of using a Web course for delivering such "jello-like" content as that found in a course on "Accreditation." However, despite his concerns, Ford decided to accept the challenge because, as he says, "for my own growth and development, I wanted first-hand experience using the Internet and this was an opportunity to begin the process."

From his experience with the Web-based course in "Accreditation," Ford says "I quickly learned through instruction and hands-on experience that creating and teaching the Web course required me to address six issues." These issues, which provide the framework for the remainder of this presentation, are the following: (1) syllabus, (2) WebBoard, (3) e-mail, (4) course adjustments, (5) technology issues, and (6) adult education issues.

1. **The Syllabus.** In dealing with the first issue, the syllabus, Professor Ford began as he did with any syllabus, i.e. developing the course content outline, identifying reading

materials, reading assignments, evaluation methods and including other pertinent institutional and administrative detail. Although Ford had access to a same-course syllabus which had been used in a traditional synchronous delivery mode, he knew that "it is unwise to simply transfer an old course to this new medium. The structure of the course, the planning for educational and personal needs, and the teacher's role must all be reconceived. The designer will have to determine what actions will promote active and independent learning. . ." (Schrum, p.56). As Professor Ford says, "Some of the readings and assignments had to be changed in order to help the teaching-learning process. In traditional classrooms we give assignments, give lectures, anticipate answers, clarify issues through responses to questions and ask questions to check on the students' conceptual level of understanding. Many of the questions are immediate which gives us feedback on our own teaching and student learning. I quickly realized that this was a major problem area in the syllabus so I started to redevelop it for a second time." As Ford re-worked the Web-course design, he confronted the reality that "On-line teaching requires the instructor to rethink the evaluation process as well. Evaluation must be ongoing and continual . . . The instructor should become familiar with each student's work through a series of activities. Without visual cues, the instructor may be unaware of a student's confusion or misunderstanding." (Schrum, p. 57)

As Professor Ford redesigned the course in accreditation to become a Web-course, he found that "the greatest obstacle was having to anticipate what kind of help the syllabus would be to the student sitting at the computer. I had to try to put myself into the shoes of the student. The syllabus I developed the first time was 15 pages; the second was almost twice that length. The major difference was that I had to try to figure out weekly assignments that would require the sort of higher-level thinking outcomes I expected, e.g., application, synthesis,evaluation."

2. **The WebBoard.** The WebBoard is the vehicle used by the faculty and students to communicate with each other in an open forum. Professor Ford was, he says, "totally unaware of the complexity of a WebBoard and its use." Fortunately, FGCU's Instructional Technology Division was very helpful in preparing Ford for that aspect of the course. The University uses a WebBoard that is part of a package for long distance education. The software is the same for all courses. Once the faculty and students learn their way around the WebBoard, the repetitious nature of its use makes it easy.

The WebBoard added various dimensions to the assignments contained in the course syllabus. For example, all the students were asked to post a personal profile of their background and experience similar to the introductory information they might exchange during a traditional first class. The students also were asked to respond to one or more of their classmates. These conversations and materials became part of the information that was recorded and available for reading on the WebBoard. Students also had the opportunity to use the WebBoard for technology instruction on long distance education. Students were expected to take or signify competency in an instructional technology module on the WebBoard.

In the course on "Accreditation," Professor Ford used the WebBoard to post "class notes" which were an outline of his lecture, and a class handout on the lecture. Included in the outline were questions that students should be able to answer in assessing their learning.

Finally, the WebBoard was used for additional instructions, clarifications and assignments. For example, one of the assignments was a take-home examination; it was posted on the WebBoard at an announced time. Another example was an assignment students had completed and posted on the WebBoard. Professor Ford commented individually on each of the completed assignments and posted the comments to provide students with a variety of samples and instructor comments in much the same way such material would be made available in a traditional classroom.

3. **E-Mail.** The third issue Professor Ford encountered in developing a Web-based course was the use of e-mail, the primary tool for communication with students. The Syllabus provided the framework for instruction; the WebBoard was the tool of open discussion and class communication. E-mail was the method used as the major tool for submission and correction of Exercises and other assignments. In the Syllabus the students were instructed to submit all weekly materials by 8:00 A.M. on each Monday during the summer session. For students, submission dates and times were never a problem except in one case of a family medical emergency.

   Using color highlights, Professor Ford corrected and returned all assignments within 48 hours. From Ford's perspective, this shorter-than-usual timeframe was not a burden because most of the students submitted the assignments early and looked forward to their review. Nevertheless, Ford says "One of the major things I learned was that tracking nearly a dozen assignments from each student was a major accounting task that I had not anticipated." As indicated in the Syllabus, all assignments were to be sent as attachments to the e-mail address. Ford then placed the newly submitted and ungraded assignment in a student's Course folder along with already-graded assignments. As the course progressed, Professor Ford found that he began to spend more and more time making sure that he had indeed graded the assignment and returned it to the student. "In retrospect, I probably should have had separate folders for the newly submitted assignments and another for ones I had reviewed and returned," Ford has since observed.

   Another discovery Professor Ford made was that the "Save As" line in the Word Document became very important. The name of the students' attachment document did not always correspond to what Professor Ford thought the title should be and as a result, Ford had difficulty retrieving the documents later in the course. For example, some students used "Exercise 2" and others used "Ex.2." Some used their names first and some used a date first. According to Ford, "I finally figured out my own system for Document Name, but I wished I would have given better instructions early in the course so I would not have wasted time."

   Speaking of time, Ford made yet another discovery: that he spent "considerable time" in front of the computer. He says that "I was told by the Instructional Technology staff that my hourly wage would be about $4. per hour by the time I finished the course. I thought this reference was to the time of the learning curve. I soon found that long distance education required one-on-one communication that required considerable time." This quality of communication was partially a result of having weekly assignments and also a result of the nature of instruction. In a traditional classroom a student asks a question that is also the question of many students. The answer therefore has an efficiency that may not be fully appreciated. In Ford's experience, the same question often appeared from multiple students, requiring multiple responses to the same question. Both the Syllabus and the WebBoard provided a solution. Professor Ford could e-mail all students, or he could post a new item which would appear the next time each student opened the WebBoard, or he could add icons with moving highlights to the Syllabus to attract students' attention.

   Ford admits that he may be victimized by his own observation about the amount of time he spent related to the Web-based course. A study at Rochester Institute of Technology found experienced instructors reported that teaching "at a distance was more time-consuming than teaching on campus." (Ehrmann, p. 28) However, a breakdown of functional activities in a follow-up study indicated that the results were more a result of first impressions than reality: one-third indicated "no difference," while one-third said "more time," and one-third said "less time."

4. **Course Adjustments.** As in any course, the instructor must make some course adjustments during the period of instruction. During the Web-based course in "Accreditation," Professor Ford decided that as soon as one student raised a question that had application for all students, he would send his response to that question to all

students. According to Ford, "spending more time on the course than I had anticipated" was his greatest adjustment. "Overall," Ford says, "I was surprised at how well the course went and how well the students did. Adjustments were few."

In reviewing data on the use of technology in education, Ehrmann states that "many institutions act as though the mere presence of technology will improve learning. They use computers to teach the same things in the same ways as before, yet they expect learning outcomes to be better." (p. 26) In this regard, Professor Ford offers that he "never expected or anticipated that the Web-based course would be better, just different and equal. Because I anticipated some problems and developed a more thorough syllabus, I suspect, but do not really know that this [different and equal] is true. I will have to await the results of FGCU's end-of-course evaluation."

Professor Ford recommends that colleagues refer to Thomas Russell's Web site for a review of 355 articles which indicate no significant difference in the outcomes for courses using instructional technology compared to outcomes for traditional classroom courses. Nevertheless, Frances and her colleagues suggest that one must go beyond objective outcomes to obtain a true comparison. They report that "there are very large differences . . . in the subjective measures of students' satisfaction." According to Frances, students "clearly felt that the quality of educational experience was much inferior when delivered using technology." (Frances, p. 33)

5. **Technology.** Professor Ford has had limited experience with information technology, i.e. he knows that scanners, links, bits, and such software as Adobe Reader exist. Lack of experience in the technology is the norm among faculty. Green reports that "we are participating in a steady process of evolution and change" in technology transformation in higher education and provides data to support the contention. (Green, p. 13)

   Professor Ford is delighted that in his work at FGCU his inexperience in technology was never an issue. Except for learning the WebBoard techniques, there was no need for Ford to learn any additional technology. The Instructional Technology division did all the work required. In addition, a person in the College was assigned as the technology consultant to be the main contact person for assistance throughout the course.According to Ford, "This system worked wonders. If I needed a link, it was done; if I needed a reference added to the Syllabus using an Internet address, it was done; if the students needed technology assistance, it was provided." For example, several students were "locked out" of the WebBoard. Contact with the technology consultant solved the problem. One day, Ford's password was not recognized and he was given instructions on how to by-pass it. One problem which required help on Ford's home campus, the University of New England, was the virus Professor Ford "picked up" on the Internet during his teaching assignment in Israel. Ford's students were getting virus warnings, so he had his computer "swept clean" and resolved the students' concerns. On several occasions, Professor Ford could not read an attachment, but Ford and the student figured out what to do, e.g., converting to Rich Text Format. Since the students were instructed to submit all documents in Word, most of the attachments could be read with ease.

6. **Adult Education.** All the students enrolled in the course were so-called "non-traditional" students, working full-time in one of the health professions. All were certified and/or licensed to practice in the State of Florida. The students' ages ranged from mid-twenties to the early fifties. The students were helpful to Professor Ford, giving him advice and suggestions during the course and expressing their questions and concerns. According to Ford, students may have had an easier time expressing concerns about learning to use the technology since he himself informed students of his status as a novice.

Typically, students enrolled in long distance education are interested in its convenience and efficiency, especially with regard to saving time. Perhaps that is why, when Professor Ford suggested a time for a "live chat," most of the students were not encouraging in their response. The general idea was that students choose distance delivery so that they could control their own time. Creating a virtual classroom by scheduling added to their problems of time, which was not very helpful. This course adjustment resulted in NO common chat.

Irby's comments are fitting: "The variety of players and learning options is exciting. The new environment offers options for students and workers that accommodate their personal needs and learning styles." (p. 40)

It is not a surprise that when Mristotis and Phipps reviewed the literature of studies reported in the 1990s on outcomes of distance versus traditional education, they derived three broad implications as follows:

1. The idea of access to college for students must account for quality of the access including the skills of the students, methods of communication, and the cost of hardware and software.
2. Technology cannot replace the human factor of student interaction. Faculty can act as "content experts, learning process design experts, process implementation managers, motivators, mentors, and interpreters."
3. "Technology is not nearly as important as other factors, such as learning tasks, learner characteristics, student motivation, and the instructor."

(pp. 16-17)

Conclusion

The experience of developing and teaching a Web-based course was interesting and a good learning experience. The authors intend to continue their development by taking some of their present courses and modifying them for potential long distance education using the Internet.

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FOR REVIEW OF THE SYLLABI SEE:

http://ruby.fgcu.edu/courses/cford/50050/students.htmlalso
http://ruby.fgcu.edu/courses/cford/50051/students.html

FOR REVIEW OF THE WEBBOARDS SEE:

http://onyx.fgcu.edu/~17 or http://onyx.fgcu.edu/~4

You can enter as a guest.

1. >www.information@coursepack.com> This is the site of an on-line service that is able to create a customized textbook for a course.
2. <www. Jenxabar.com> This site purports to putting courses on Web sites for college instructors, particularly for colleges that do not have Instructional Technology capacity.
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Increasing Success for Adult Students with Disabilities: Matching Technologies and Other Strategies to the Individual Learner

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Introduction

According to a special Harris poll in 1998, at least 54 million people in the United States have at least one disability. "Seventy-five percent of America's citizens with disabilities want to work. Less than 10 percent do. They are the poorest of the poor; living on a variety of social support programs that keep them unemployed and out of sight. Each year the government spends an estimated 60 billion dollars on various programs for those with disabilities, but less than 1 percent of those funds are spent to break the cycle of poverty and dependency" (Beziat, 1990). Of the more than 30 million individuals with disabilities between the ages of 18 – 62, most have not completed postsecondary education programs or successfully obtained meaningful employment, even though most are considered to be intellectually capable of pursuing higher education.

Of the 60% of persons with disabilities, who have completed high school, very small percentages continue their studies and attend college. Only 6.4% of students in postsecondary education have disabilities (Henderson, 1995). Traditional higher education programs frequently have not been successful in meeting many of the special needs of this population. For adult learners the reasons that they have not pursued postsecondary educational programs are diverse: negative past experiences in education, lack of belief in their own capabilities as learners, lack of support from social services, postsecondary education institutions, and others who have not considered them candidates for higher education, and difficulties in school related to undiagnosed learning disabilities (Gadbow and Du Bois, 1998).

Despite these disappointing statistics, education is still seen as the single most effective strategy to increase the employment of people with disabilities and to move them in the direction of increased economic self-sufficiency and independent, inclusive living. In addition to the range of learning styles and other issues that affect learning in adults, students with disabilities have many different specific and special needs that may be addressed through a combination of new technologies and individualized approaches and programs. The challenge for educators, especially those interested in adult higher education, is an unmistakable one. For persons with disabilities, it is essential to make connections with strategies important for success in postsecondary education: resources, new forms of learning, appropriate individualized accommodations, programs to promote self-advocacy and self-determination, and assistive technology

This presentation addresses a number of these issues and strategies through discussion, demonstration, case studies, and by mutual sharing of our learning with that of participants in the session. Working with both undergraduate and graduate students over a number of years, we have, through experimentation and experience, discovered technologies and strategies that have led to the successful completion of degrees for a number of individuals with different disabilities and needs related to learning. We have added the use of new technologies and approaches built on the modes of delivery services that have been used successfully by SUNY Empire State College (ESC) and other nontraditional institutions.

Application of Adult Education Principles

Adult education philosophy has emphasized understanding adult learners and the factors and issues that they face: their characteristics, developmental tasks and issues, how they learn (learning styles), motivation, barriers to learning, and diversity of learners. The belief that there are many different ways to learn and to demonstrate learning underlies many adult education models and theories. However, much of traditional education and a significant amount of adult education practice do not actively support this perspective through typical methods used to determine mastery of knowledge and skills. For persons with disabilities possible ways of learning and demonstrating learning have increased dramatically in recent years, particularly with new and expanded uses of assistive and learning technologies (Scherer and Galvin, 1996).

The role for adult educators includes helping adults with disabilities to be aware of themselves as learners, how they learn best, and the strategies and technologies that can be used to aid learning. Providing information about different strategies and connecting learners with specific needs with technology specialists is an important way to prepare these individuals to participate successfully in postsecondary education programs. Sharing the stories of successful experiences of adult learners with disabilities who have successfully completed college programs is perhaps the best way to change the paradigm and open up opportunities for others who have not yet considered postsecondary education as a path.

Matching Technologies and Other Strategies with Individual Needs

In our work with a number of students with specific disabilities, we have found many who were not aware of how they learn best or that particular technologies, programs, and services are available that could greatly enhance their options for effective learning. Linda, who has a learning disability, did not know about software that would allow her to speak into a computer to "write a paper." Jim did not know that his particular condition was considered a disability and could entitle him to vocational rehabilitation services, including funds to pay for college tuition and a computer to help him in his studies.

Many different types of technologies and other strategies have been used successfully as learning accommodations for specific disabilities: voice-recognition computer programs, scanners for transferring print materials to a computer screen and reader, accessible equipment adapted for specific physical disabilities, computers with special keyboards, large print documents, notetakers, interpreters, closed-captioned videos and films, and books on tape – to name a few.

For students in traditional programs, as well as a range of non-traditional and distance learning programs, traditional mail, phone, and e-mail communication can be supplemented by new options for communication and learning between the student and faculty, as well as among students. As an example, web phones provide for "face-to-face" interaction for two or more individuals at different locations at a reasonable cost and are a valuable resource for students at a distance and students who find frequent travel to colleges for meetings difficult. Other accommodations, such as accessible transportation, parking, and convenient scheduling, are important for learners to be able to get to and participate in educational programs.

In addition to helping adults who consider seeking postsecondary education, there is a great need to increase awareness of these approaches and technologies that are being used successfully by learners with special needs: throughout the general population, and especially, among service providers and postsecondary education institutions. A liaison role between educational, service, and technology providers and adults with disabilities who may be potential learners in various postsecondary programs is one that should be developed and supported by adult educators. Groups, such as regional consortia, can play a major role in fostering a climate of sharing ideas, resources, and information among these institutions and organizations.

Self-Advocacy, Self-Determination and Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning and strategies to help learners develop skills as independent learners, have been an important concepts throughout adult education literature for many years. We have noticed the connection between self-directed learning and trends that have been developing as part of the Disability Civil Rights Movement: self-advocacy and self-determination. Specific training can help individuals with disabilities to develop or enhance their skills to be able to advocate for themselves and to determine directions for their own life. Use of personal development courses or learning modules provided in different delivery modes (group, individual, on-line, video) with supporting resource materials can ease the beginning of a degree program and lead to increased likelihood of completion. Personal productivity skills, time management, development of self-advocacy and self-determination strategies, assessment of learning styles, self-assessment of oneself as a learner, and application of effective learning-how-to-learn strategies provided in such learning modules develop solid skills and abilities for use in educational programs and in the workplace.

Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate the range of issues that adult learners with disabilities face and the types of strategies, accommodations, and technologies used to help them be successful in reaching educational goals.

> At the age of nine Susan had been diagnosed as having a significant reading disability. She has a very low comprehension when reads. She is primarily an auditory learner who learns well when she listens to class presentations, tape-recorded books and materials, or a reader. However, this learning disability was not recognized by the school she was attending and appropriate accommodations were not made. She experienced many humiliating experiences and was told by a teacher that she was just "lazy." Throughout school and in her earlier attempts at college, she describes many negative experiences.
>
> In her mid-thirties, Susan decided to try again. First, she went to a community college where her particular needs as a learner were confirmed by testing and appropriate accommodations were made and supported by understanding faculty. This success prompted her to continue her education by entering a non-traditional bachelor's degree program at a state university. She continued to use the strategies that she had learned at the community college and demonstrated her learning well in papers that she wrote using a computer. Her desire to learn and her persistence enabled this intelligent and determined woman to earn a bachelor's degree.

Susan's experience is not unique among adults who may seek to enter college or some other educational program. Ellen's story illustrate accommodations that helped her to earn a bachelor's degree.

> Ellen became blind as a young woman and had two small children to care for at home. She wanted to pursue a bachelor's degree, but needed to find a non-traditional program that would allow her to do much of her work from home. Using a computer and software that allows her to listen to materials, she successfully carries out many learning activities, including "surfing the web" for the latest research information for term projects. Communication was aided by e-mail, as well as phone conversations. A range of assistive and educational technologies helped her to be able to reach her educational goal. This experience also has provided her with many skills and strategies that could be useful in employment settings.

Susan and Ellen's stories illustrate two of many different types and combinations of disabilities that adult learners may have. The types of accommodations that may be useful for each individual are many and varied. New technologies continually are pushing out the frontiers of what is possible and are helping to open opportunities for learning for those who previously had few choices.

The Learning Spectrum: A Web Resource Database

The integration of technology presents new opportunities to provide resources on many topics and make them available to those persons seeking information. We have been involved in an ongoing project that has resulted in a resource database on the World Wide Web that provides an extensive network of information and resources regarding disabilities and disability issues. The first phase of this project was partially funded by a campus grant from the Affirmative Action Committee of the United University Professions.

The project, entitled **The Learning Spectrum,** provides information for faculty and professional staff as they work with students with disabilities. However, it is available to all persons who seek such information, including adults with disabilities who may be considering postsecondary education, and is linked to a host of other web-based resources. The resources available on the website, which will be updated and new information added to regularly, include the following: different types of disabilities, multiple disabilities, accommodations including assistive technology, case studies of effective use of accommodations related to learning, service providers by region, national and international organizations related to specific disabilities and disability issues, strategies for promoting learning, strategies for helping students become competent self-directed learners, strategies for promoting self-advocacy and self-determination, and connections to other relevant source.

Unique to this web page will be information about accommodations and strategies for serving students with disabilities in non-traditional settings, such as intensive residencies, independent studies, and distance learning programs, including options facilitated by print and mail and those delivered by synchronous and asynchronous electronic methods. These resources and strategies are applicable both to undergraduate and graduate study, as well as to many other learning and workplace settings.

In this interactive session the panel will describe some of these strategies, technologies, and resources, and their application in helping adults with disabilities to succeed in postsecondary education programs. Analysis of case studies and demonstration of use of technologies will provide concrete examples of how particular individuals with specific needs have increased their confidence and skills as learners and have successfully earned college degrees.

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Developing a Connective Spine for the Learner's Body of Knowledge: Five Vertically Integrated Courses

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Introduction

As a new millennium approaches, it is clear that that whole face of higher education has gradually changed and its market diversified. Even within the realm of adult higher education, learners present a great variety of interests, motivation, values, learning styles, and skills. Some learners are market-driven to return to school; primarily motivated to complete a degree to position themselves for the next professional level. Older adult students are more often interested in personal development and through their experiences have become more self-directed in their learning. A growing cadre of students is ready to utilize technology resources for their education, yet others come unprepared for such experiences. This rich diversity of students has challenged higher education to be progressive and innovative in its programming. While many adult education programs compete for the same student population, each seems to find a niche in the market, and carves out its own way to identify and meet student needs.

In the last decade, adult higher education has been especially attentive to issues of programmatic development and student assessment. The Adult Higher Education Alliance provided a community in which institutions have been able to work collaboratively on developing and applying the Principles of Good Practice (1990). Faculty and administrators from programs across the country have presented papers, held roundtable discussions and forums as they examined and explained the evolutionary changes occurring in their programs. This type of discourse contributes to the field by expanding our collective understanding of the nature of adult learning and assessment.

Capital University's Adult Degree Program continues to develop and redefine itself as well. As the program has matured over the last twenty years, faculty and administrators in this mid-western program have worked to clarify programmatic mission and goals and have vigorously debated curricular issues that impact student growth and development. This paper will reveal our personal struggle to uncover and balance the changing needs of our students, faculty and administrators as we position our program within the larger university community. By means of a historical journey, we will present the gradual and sometimes-controversial evolution of a new set of courses intended to define our program, connect our curriculum, and enhance programmatic quality and student development.

Historical Background – An Adult Program is Born

In the late 1970s, Capital University, a small, private, traditional university, adopted an adult program called University Without Walls (UWW) with the intent of offering a shared arts and sciences curriculum. This new program opened the university to a fresh market of creative adult students who were interested in learning, and self-directed enough to operate primarily within an independent study format. Under the suspicious eye of the university's traditional faculty, the early program encouraged students to be at the center of academic planning by negotiating learning contracts with faculty, individualizing majors for degree completion, and developing personalized senior projects. This student-centered approach to learning was a fundamental philosophy of University Without Walls and was reflected in two courses unique to the UWW program – Portfolio Development and Senior Project.

In the early years, the portfolio development course served as an orientation to the UWW program and closely tied the student to the process of degree planning. In that first required independent study class, students considered three primary questions – (1) What have I learned? (2) How have I learned? and (3) What do I need to do now? Early in the course, students began to address these questions by writing learning autobiographies that helped them identify and gain credit for prior college-level learning. At the same time, as students were guided to assess their learning styles, they were able identify the learning methods that would be most beneficial to them as they negotiated learning contracts with faculty. In this early version of the portfolio class, students were empowered to enhance their own curriculum by identifying specific course needs to expand within a degree.

While the portfolio course served as an entry point for UWW students, a final course called Senior Project was viewed as the capstone experience for students. Ideally, the work students did in portfolio led them to pursue a degree of meaningful course work that would lead to an individually designed senior project. As students proceeded through the program, from portfolio development through senior project, they were nurtured to be self-directed in their learning. This process put students at the heart of curricular planning, a practice which soon waned.

Growing Pains

As the years passed and the program grew, change was imminent for a number of reasons that reflected the needs of program administrators, of faculty, and last yet not least, of students. University Without Walls was renamed the Adult Degree Program, and although the program remained student-centered in some ways, the responsibility for curricular development began to rest with faculty and administrators.

From an administrative point of view, it became increasingly important for the program to gain credibility with its traditional, main campus faculty. In the early 1990s, Adult Degree Program faculty from the three regional centers became an organized group with established Bylaws and tenure-track positions within the School of Arts and Sciences. These significant events meant that the program had reached a level of programmatic autonomy, yet remained tied to Arts and Sciences by a common curriculum. The program's focus on offering "flexibility" to working adult learners, demonstrated by the independent study model of course delivery, remained a primary difference between the two university programs.

As time passed, the reality of operating a larger program challenged the ADP to refine its mode of course delivery. The combination of an increasing number of students and changes in university-required curriculum precipitated a shift from the independent study model to a seminar-style format. As more students needed to enroll in the same courses, individual learning contracts evolved into set syllabi. "Flexibility" for students was redefined as fewer seminar contact hours versus student input in curricular planning.

As the ADP faculty grew in number and credentials, faculty determined that the program should set goals for its learners. With faculty and administrators active in national communities of adult learning, the five adopted goals reflected the trends of adult higher education. ADP faculty articulated the desire for students to become self-managed, lifelong, collaborative, self-aware, experiential learners. Although these goals were approved, no specific methods were identified to programmatically assist students in developing these qualities. Ironically, the portfolio course, which would have introduced students to this type of personal development, had been assimilated into the A&S curriculum, and the process of portfolio development became a way to assess course equivalencies rather than a means of identifying curricular needs.

Amid so much programmatic change, student needs seemed to shift as well. Since students were no longer *required* to take the portfolio course, there was no common "entry point" into the program, and fewer students took the opportunity to reflect on and articulate experiential learning. Although the senior project remained a required capstone course, it became evident that students entering the program were often less academically prepared to excel in a writing-intensive program, and not ready by the end of the program to initiate a self-directed senior research project. Some students admitted into this primarily degree-completion program seemed to lack basic reading and writing competencies, and a few were unfamiliar with the technology required for research. Although most students were working professionals, our experience seemed to mirror Candy's (1991) assertion that self-direction in other life situations does not automatically transfer to the learning environment. It became evident that gradual changes in the program had pre-empted the opportunity to encourage students to practice self-assessment and develop the ability to become self-directed in their learning.

A Disjointed Program

In 1997, as part of a university-wide assessment, the Adult Degree Program underwent formal program review. In the resulting written evaluations, internal reviewers noted problems associated with the academic preparedness of learners; and external reviewers offered suggestions for improving the quality of learning in ADP through curricular development that would strengthen courses already offered in the program (Whitford et al., 1997; Lancaster, 1997). As a result of the evaluators' comments and the general unrest among faculty with student preparedness and performance, the dean established a project team (P-Team) to consider ways to re-connect the ADP learning community. One specific dictate was for the P-Team to re-envision a course offered sporadically in the program, "Fundamentals of Learning Development " (FOLD). This course had been offered at some point in time in all three satellite centers (Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Ohio) as an admission condition for marginal students, but was not consistently offered or consistently the same course in all centers.

As this team of faculty from all three centers gathered to examine the FOLD course and its impact on student development, they noted that although students were reluctant to take the course unless it was required, those who took it seemed to benefit by gaining direction, skills and confidence. As the discussion developed, a consensus emerged among the team members – the program needed to find a way to help all learners develop research, writing and thinking skills, become more self-managed and self-directed, and make connections in their learning. Literally, we had a "tail" in our Senior Project course, but no way of connecting courses along the way or steering students toward this rigorous final project. The team decided that we needed to return to the idea of a common entry point for all students. This meant reviewing the program admission policy and working together on curricular development.

The "Spine" Develops

Initially, the P-Team worked to come to a common understanding of who our students were and what academic needs they brought to the program. In reviewing the admission process, the team found that a virtually open-admission policy brought students of varying skills to the program. It became clear that the brief, spontaneous writing sample required for entry did not adequately serve our need to evaluate the writing skills of students entering the program. The P-Team investigated student assessment tools used in other adult programs (Compass and Learning Plus), but literature about the effectiveness of such assessment (Broadfoot, 1996) swayed the decision to consider other ways of helping students identifying their own needs without a required formal assessment.

Initially, the team envisioned a required course at the start of the program that would introduce students to theories of adult learning and development and encourage self-assessment to identify deficiencies in reading, writing, math and computer skills. Although an independent researcher suggested that teaching and learning might be enhanced if tied more intentionally to formal theories of adult learning (Brewer, 1998), the larger faculty body contended that students were more in need of training in research skills than in adult learning theory. Through the course of evaluative discussion, faculty began to again think of degree planning as a form of personal research which would encourage students to reflectively assess their needs and identify learning objectives that might serve as the seed for truly significant capstone projects.

Over a period of nearly three years, ADP faculty continued to debate and refine the recommendations of the project team. In the Fall of 1999, the program will officially offer a newly developed series of courses that are vertically integrated to develop research skills, and intentionally tied to courses across the curriculum relating to core, major, and elective course work. In the series, "research" is broadly conceived as "disciplined discovery strengthened by and expressed through disciplined thinking and disciplined writing." Throughout the faculty's deliberative forums in creating and refining these courses, two guiding questions were foundational: 1.) What is in the best interests of our adult learners for their connected journey through a logically-sequenced "spine" of Internet-enhanced research courses? and 2.) How can learners' needs be met with the fewest required credit hours?

The ADP model attempts to balance these issues by requiring every student to take at least one research methods course (ADP 199), but building into the curriculum other opportunities to strengthen the learner's research skills through another advanced research course (ADP 399). Capital's model is as follows:

> **ADP 109, Academic Planning (1 semester hour).** Based on personal research of their learning histories, formal and experiential, learners create a fully written learning plan to guide their course work from matriculation to graduation. Generally an elective course.
>
> **ADP 199, Research Methods for Liberal Inquiry (3 semester hours).** Learners work through the standard process of subject-area research, from hypothesis to documentation, while being facilitated toward conscious awareness of interdisciplinary connections. Guided to make the humanistic link between personal learning history and interests (ADP 109 or this course) and their choice of subject for disciplined discovery, learners create a learning plan AND engage the process of both traditional and Internet-related data collection and data evaluation. A required course for students pursuing a multidisciplinary major or any student with a major lacking a research methods course.
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> **ADP 299, Prior Learning Portfolio Development (3 semester hours).** In this previously existing course, now renumbered and reconceived to reflect its place in a vertically integrated sequence, learners are guided to connect their personal learning history research (ADP 109) and their interests in future, expanded research projects (ADP 199) with requests for competency-based credit. An elective course. Prerequisite: ADP 199.
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> **ADP 399, Advanced Research Seminar (3 semester hours).** This course offers further development of interdisciplinary and Web-enhanced skills for "disciplined discovery," particularly as related to evidence and argument evaluation, including Internet source assessment. Building on ADP (109) 199 (and 299), the course further develops learners' conceptions of interdisciplinary connections to other learning and personal interests, standard research methods, and experiential learning. Additionally, the course prepares learners who wish to firm up their preparation for ADP 499, Senior Project. An elective course, strongly encouraged. Prerequisite: ADP 199.
>
> **ADP 499, Senior Project (3-6 semester hours).** Building on skills developed in (ADP 109) 199 (299 and 399), this previously existing capstone seminar engages the interdisciplinary interests of participants toward the creation of a major research paper or project, based on identified past experiential and formal learning. A required course. Prerequisite: ADP 199.

A Work in Progress

Thankfully, by its very nature, program development is never stagnant. Even as the above mentioned courses are being implemented for the first time, faculty continue to debate issues of teaching, learning, and assessment. Early concerns about entering students reading, writing, math and computer skills are not sufficiently addressed by this new series of courses. Since faculty were concerned with adding to degree requirements, the new course series is not required of all students. Consequently, some who would benefit from the experience may opt not to bother. On the other hand, although ADP 199 might act as a gatekeeper for conditionally admitted students with weaker skills, the program has yet to settle on a plan to help learners with remedial needs. One center will pilot an additional new course to assist students lacking computer experience. Another is working to develop ways to individually help students who struggle with writing. A third center is using a combination of the new elective course sequence along with university core requirements as a tool for developing writing and critical thinking skills in students conditionally admitted to the program. Concurrently, a statewide ad-hoc Admission Committee will work to develop admission criteria to help ensure student success while retaining relatively open admission practices.

A second issue of on-going discussion relates to the relationship between process and content. In the models for the new courses, degree planning, research, and portfolio development are processes that become the content of exploration and evaluation. Many transfer students in the Adult Degree Program have difficulty articulating a proposal that describes and rationalizes a multidisciplinary major. In ADP 109 and 199, it is hoped that group discussions of planned and connected learning will encourage students to take control of their learning and help them to better articulate their goals in the context of a liberal education. Although particular students may benefit from a very directive study of the processes of these learning exercises, some faculty propose to ground the courses in the content of autobiographical studies with the expectation that students will make the connections to their own learning.

Conclusion

The ADP "spine" has been developed and will continue to be strengthened through student and faculty input. A next step for the program will be to follow the lead of others who have focussed on assessing programmatic success (Lauderdale and Woodruff, 1998). Candy (1991) talks of the importance of helping students develop a sense of personal control in their learning so they might be more self-directed. It is hoped that this new series of courses will assist students to that end. The combination of the new sequence of ADP courses with our current program of personal advising should help to foster a learning community where students are able to improve their problem-solving skills and consciously find connections in their learning and in their lives.

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Balancing Instructional Modes: Complementing Instructional Technology and Face-to-Face Learning through Journal Writing and Student Collaboration

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Irene Rivera de Royston, MSW, SUNY Empire State College

Introduction

Like many of its sister institutions in the field of adult higher education, Empire State College has been continually concerned with determining effective approaches to learning. On the simplest level, two kinds of learning can be contrasted as polar ends of a continuum. On one end, learning is mostly passive, directed at retention and retrieval, and often delivered by an authority to a novice learner. This may be characterized, at the extreme, as rote learning evaluated by short answer exams. At the other end of the continuum, learning is more active and collaborative, featuring activities that are perceived as more likely to lead to lifelong learning, where the student develops an appetite for independent learning and pursues academic activities in a self-motivated and self-initiated manner. At Empire State, this latter learning is perceived as optimal, and in the customized, one-on-one educational delivery mode typical at the college, the use of student journals has become an enlivening and enriching tool for learning.

Keeping journals, diaries, and logs has been around for a long time as activities that contribute to creativity, communication, and self-enlightenment. A perusal of most public libraries will turn up works by such as Ludwig Van Beethoven, Louisa May Alcott, Mary Shelley, Stonewall Jackson, Che Guevara, Sylvia Plath, Ayn Rand, Allan Ginsburg, and many others, as well as the most famous publication in this genre, Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl.* Often included in these works are drawings and poems, in addition to narrative statements. In the college learning context, journaling allows the student: to engage and interact with concepts and data, observations, and other people's ideas; to perceive, respond, analyze and interpret; and to be rewarded with the potentially rich learning experience that results. Knowledge or learning becomes not merely an application of ideas, but also involves a reflection upon ideas. The faculty member in the guided independent study mode is comforted to know that when students are off on their own, there is much potential for them to be actively engaged and focused on their academic work. When we ask, how can we as faculty members productively guide student efforts, and how can we encourage learners to take charge of their experiences and to have the courage to go deeper in their explorations, the journal activity appears to be very much on the right track.

A key concept in this activity is *reflection,* which creates the opportunity for the deep learning that is fostered in the interaction between the student and the presented material. The student is not only absorbing information, but is also enhancing this knowledge by incorporating thoughts from their work and family experience, a source of rich material for the adult student. Another key concept pertains to the *"affective domain"* or the connection between thinking and feeling, and the enhanced depth of learning that may result. In the field of counseling and psychotherapy, much work has been done in this area by Ira Progroff (1992), who developed models for the Intensive Journal Workshop as a self-discovery method, involving such concepts as healing, creativity, self-fulfillment, and self-discovery. Encouraging students to discuss their feelings about what they are learning and allowing connections between didactic material and the emotional life has much potential to add depth and longevity to learning.

Journal Writing

Guided independent study challenges the adult learner to engage in reflective analysis and construct their knowledge based on critical thinking. Learning journals can provide a means for capturing the ideas generated through this engagement with reading and research materials. The process of maintaining learning journals encourages students to shift from an information accumulating educational process to a cognitive construction approach in their learning. Through learning journals, students reflect, interact and react with the material presented in their reading, research and lecture activities. The learning journal promotes the construction of knowledge and gives voice to their thoughtful interaction with information. In the process of integrated learning a student moves from the banking model of education to a fuller ownership of knowledge. Cohen (1988) acknowledges this by stating that "knowledge is a human creation rather than a human reception." As educators working with adult learners often observe, when students create understanding through relevant experience rather than through the accumulation of facts, their learning experiences are more rewarding and yield to a richer knowledge of the various academic disciplines (Black and Ammon, 1992). In order to facilitate this integrated level of knowing, students must immerse themselves in contemplative thought patterns and reflections (Levine and Jacobs, 1986).

A particular tool for encouraging this intensive learning activity is journal writing. There are several forms of journaling and it is well documented that scientific research relies on lab or observation journaling. Journals can be free of structure and simply provide a record of thoughts, events or observations. The guided journal will call for a more structured approach to writing and can be organized around learning goals and objectives. A particular form for guided journaling is the "double entry" journal. It is simply a double sided record which provides space for concrete notations, exacting quotations and factual transfers as well as for reflective analysis and questions which stimulate critical thinking. This double entry journal writing can be effective for recording notes from reading assignments as well as lectures or visual presentations (video, films, documentaries). During study group or class discussion sessions students can share their journals with fellow students and render more comprehensive and integrated discussions of their reading and research. At discussion sessions with their instructors, students will find themselves better prepared for creative and provocative inquiry regarding the particular subject matter under review.

The double entry journal is simple to construct and use. Students can maintain these journals in three-ring binders with lined paper or in spiral-bound notebooks. The left-hand column is used to take notes: reading notes, direct quotation, observational notes, lists, images, descriptions of events, summaries, etc. The right hand column is used to record their own thinking regarding reading or regarding lectured information. The right-hand column provides students with space for their ideas, reactions, objections, questions and inquiries. The left column is concrete and factual, the right column is creative and interactive. In the left column the student quotes exact information and in the right column students construct their knowledge in their own words and give practical examples of the application of the ideas and theories presented within their independent learning activities.

The purpose of the double entry learning journal is two fold: first, students can carry on an interactive dialogue with the text of the reading or research, constructing and recording their impressions and summaries, making the knowledge their own; second, they use these text to broaden the dialog and invite others into their learning experience. This journaling approach may be utilized in computer based interactive learning mediums in the form of chat rooms with fellow students and it is possible that this structured journal writing will encourage the student who is hesitant to write in that it provides a reason and clear form for written expression.

Experience with the use of "double entry" learning journals has shown that discussion of assigned readings takes on a very different form when the journal is used. Instead of the instructor leading discussions, the discussions are learner centered and collaborative in their result. This double entry journal has been received positively by independent learners and it has aided in the development of self-directed learning skills. It is a method for encouraging critical thinking and reflective analysis and students report that when they review their journals, their thinking was clearer, they were able to discuss material in a thoughtful manner and apply concepts with a disciplined approach.

Collaborative Learning

An early experience with study groups resulted from using some of Betsy Steltenpohl and Jane Shipton's research which sought ways of introducing students to the meaning of higher education and the liberal arts, to individualized learning, and to theories of adult development. Their 1996 publication (with Sharon Villines) contains much of their original work: short readings and related questions have been helpful with newly enrolled students, particularly those who have had little or no experience with higher education.

For some of these students, reading reflectively is difficult as is the process of responding to non-factual questions... answers were not found in the text. Skills of interpretation and conceptualization are frequently non-existent. Responses in learning journals vary significantly in content and development. Rather than encourage generalized large group discussion where only some of the students participate, a more realistic approach is to break students into small groups, dyads or triads, for "collaborative learning."

Students in each small group use responses in their learning journals for discussion; "recorders" are selected to report small group results to the entire group after a set period of time. Moving from group to group, the mentor participates in discussion when asked, but generally listens and observes.

Opportunities for collaborative learning in each small group result in enhanced understanding of reading assignments, increased confidence, greater participation in discussion, and growth of initiative. As students gain confidence in their own ability to give voice to their thoughts in the non-threatening small group environment, they receive encouragement and individual feedback from their peers. Skills of critical thinking, interpretation and conceptualization are developed as ideas are shared, argued and discussed.

One student who had remained silent for several weeks wrote in her journal that,

"You must learn how to do your share in collaborative learning so that you can get the most out of the learning experience. I guess I could see the classmates as being each other's teachers, learning from one another and the real teacher being the mediator. Classmates can learn to learn from each other. Some people may not have thought that they could, but when given the opportunity to do so, found it was indeed possible. Now they're able to work with different people and learn new things from working in a group, regardless of the difference in views and ideas or opinions."

Another student observed that, "Theories of learning collaboratively support the digestion of knowledge by reconstructing reasoning as a group. The concept goes beyond foundational or cognitive learning, which is simply transference of information from teacher to student... student to teacher. The progression to active participation in study groups is an excellent means to accomplish this objective. It allows an individual to assume the roles of referee or judge, to examine, present, and confront new authority on information. Collaborative learning in our study group exemplified what a tremendous responsibility we have as students and teachers to enable and preserve the learning process. Exchanging viewpoints on the conflicts of interpretation was enlightening and enriching for me."

As defined by Clark et.al. (1996,196), collaborative learning is the "centerpiece of exchange." Sharing and mutuality are characterized in terms of "understanding" the work of one another. Both dialogue and full participation are emphasized. Through collaboration, views are shared, new knowledge is constructed and work is developed jointly. John Steiner et.al. (1998) notes that collaboration produces multiple outcomes as well as questions. Responsibility is shared by all members who learn to "compensate for one another's short comings" (Smith, 1996), seek to achieve common goals through consideration of everyone's contributions, talk freely and listen actively. Through collaboration, Bruffee (1996) observes that students learn interdependence. By talking together and reaching agreement in small groups, they construct knowledge which in turn is compared with that of other groups, then to the class as a whole where consensus is reached.

Learning journals offer opportunity for students to examine ideas presented in their readings, to think reflectively, to agree or disagree with an author's statements and to explain why, and to understand another's point of view. Used in conjunction with opportunities for collaborative learning, learning journals help students find their own voice, discover confidence, and gain courage to engage in dialogue, consider other students' point of view, and reach a consensus through reconstruction of knowledge.

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Note: special acknowledgment is given to Herman Woodrow Hughes – Professor of Education in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University, Culver City, California. His workshop at the conference of Educators and Scholars at the InterAmerican University in Puerto Rico in April 1997 provided the bases for this paper and his model for the double journal entry has been applied within this work.

Connecting Students, Faculty, and Support Systems Through Technology To Make a Difference in Retention

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Introduction

"Distance Learning is not a new phenomenon" (CGS Policy Statement, 1998). However, the recent advent of, and rapid expansion of, distance learning using online or web based technologies is. Programs that utilize various computer technologies have begun to gather data and evaluate the learning experience of their students. For some students the nature of their distance delivered program creates multiple opportunities for new types of disconnections. This may, in part have influenced the high attrition rate many online programs have experienced (Verduin and Clark, 1991). However, other students have declared attending courses in the online environment as an experience of intense community with more connections to colleagues, scholars and the academic community than ever experienced in a face to face experience.

How shall we as administrators and faculty assure our students a positive experience within a technology enhanced environment? What strategies are worth implementing to reduce the possibility of disconnections, and increase the academic connectors for students? Will increasing the opportunity for new kinds of connections increase the likelihood of student success and increased retention, thereby contribution to overall program success? Education professionals have begun to ask themselves questions like these related to the integration of technology into education. Many institutions have embraced online support or distance delivered courses and programs as part of their curricular offerings.

Walden University

Walden University has been offering course based, graduate programs in the online environment for over four years. In that time much has been learned about disconnections and connections for students. Disconnections may include: the characteristics of adult learners, the initial student-faculty relationship, and the use of the technology itself (Hillesheim, 1998). According to Berge and Schrum (1998) a mini-course would "ensure students understand" (p.34) their environment, rights and responsibilities. Walden has developed a critical orientation course for all students entering the University. In addition an online instructor course was developed for faculty. The faculty course grew out of the student version of such a course and is currently part of a required new faculty orientation, and a year of faculty development at Walden University. Both the student version and the faculty version of the course will be detailed below. Finally, as strong, distance delivered support system for students has been developed. These courses, together with a process based student service system have been put into place in an effort to increase student retention in distance based programs.

Retention and Student/faculty Success

Walden University, in 1997 began studying the problem of retention of first-year graduate (master's and doctoral) students. Approximately 30% of new students leave their program by the end of their fifth quarter of enrollment. The consequences for both the students and the institution are quite high. While Walden's philosophy has historically been that student learning can be self-paced, the University increasingly came to understand that many first year students need more from the institution than they had been receiving in order to succeed. A better structure, more accessible resources, and additional support structure

(Morrison, 1998) were required. In the fall of 1998 Walden University implemented an initiative called "Retention First-A Quality Start" providing a new role for faculty, linking these faculty with program administration, establishing increased support for both the student and their faculty mentor, and beginning a structured orientation course for students. The goals of this initiative are legion: a higher rate of student retention in the first year of enrollment, effective socialization of students to the importance of quality and integrity in their academic and scholarly work, to prepare and assist faculty in guiding students through their initial set of requirements, and providing faculty mentors and academic counselors the opportunity for more timely and effective intervention with "at-risk" students.

After six months of operation it became clear that in addition to students, faculty were in need of some of the identified skills and knowledge being given to students. A revision of the student orientation course was developed specifically for faculty in the online environment.

The practical application of these services is coordinated through the newly established "Start-up Team." This team of counselors have several tasks including:

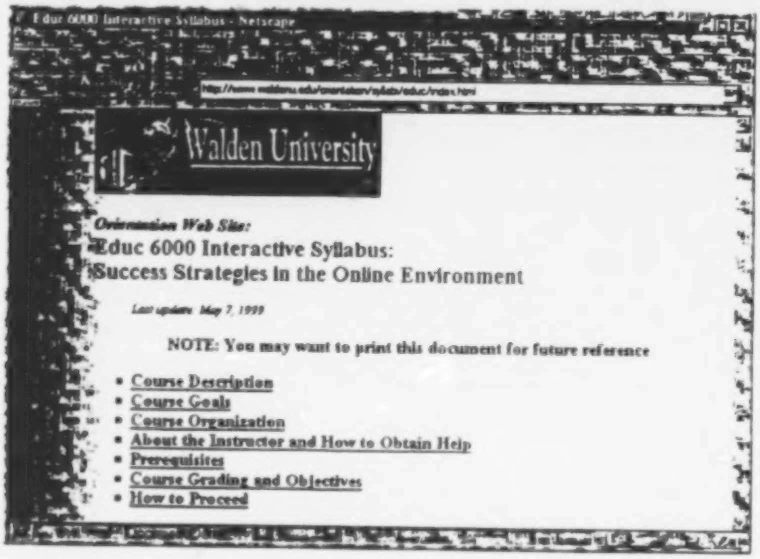
1. Assist in development of orientation materials.
2. Participate in orientation conference call for the new student.
3. Monitor the new student's activity within the online classroom.
4. Monitor the new students progress toward accomplishment of the first quarter objectives.
5. Assign and monitor new student/previous student mentor relationship
6. Review the students Program of Study.
7. Monitor students GPA for minimum standards.
8. Monitor student course registrations.
9. Support the student, and the faculty mentor throughout the completion of the first year academic requirements.
10. Intervene in situations where progress is not being made.
11. Work closely with the faculty mentor assuring student progress.

EDUC 6000/8000 Success Strategies in the Online Environment

Much of what the distance based students experienced as a result of the initiative was the addition of a new, required, zero credit course to their academic program requirements. This course is offered within their first quarter, and is taken simultaneously with their initial academic course requirement. The course is called Success Strategies in the Online Environment. The 12 week course covers such topics as "Being an Independent Learner," "Becoming a Member of the Walden Community of Scholars," Writing as a Graduate Student," "Getting Help: Where the Resources Are," and "Critical Thinking Skills." The web based course is taught by the new student's faculty mentor utilizing an established series of modules representing the specific content of the course. In addition the mentor facilitates group discussion each week regarding the content, assists the student in their first quarter connectivity and technology issues, promotes community, reviews the students program of study, assists in student registration, monitors course related activities, and generally serves as the students first point of contact. The specific outcomes of the Success Strategies and their related activities were developed by the institution and include the following:

1. Ability to access and navigate within the Walden Forum
2. Ability to plan a personal academic program.
3. Ability to use technology appropriately for registration of courses.
4. Creation of a skill set of appropriate success strategies for use within a distance environment.

A snap-shot of the syllabus page follows. Each item is a link to a specific set of readings (modules) and activities. Students are directed to read assignment, gather information, create answers to specific questions, and post them to a discussion area . During the first portion of the week students respond directly to the facilitator questions in the discussion. During the latter part of the week students respond to other student's postings generating student to student discussion which the instructor facilitates. This avoids superficiality and redundancy and encourages synthesis, critical thinking, and higher quality discussion between students.



Orientation Web Site:

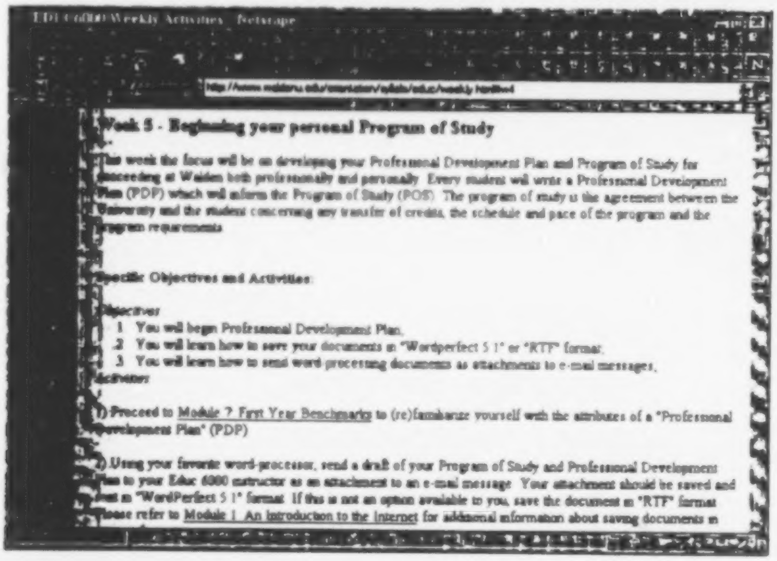
Educ 6000 Interactive Syllabus:
Success Strategies in the Online Environment

Last update: May 7, 1999

NOTE: You may want to print this document for future reference

- Course Description
- Course Goals
- Course Organization
- About the Instructor and How to Obtain Help
- Prerequisites
- Course Grading and Objectives
- How to Proceed

The page below shows the syllabus and a single topic area "Beginning your Personal Program of Study." Note there are three objectives and three activities. The link in the activity sends students to the necessary information for the activity.



Week 5 - Beginning your personal Program of Study

This week the focus will be on developing your Professional Development Plan and Program of Study for succeeding at Walden both professionally and personally. Every student will write a Professional Development Plan (PDP) which will inform the Program of Study (POS). The program of study is the agreement between the University and the student concerning any transfer of credits, the schedule and pace of the program and the program requirements.

Specific Objectives and Activities:

Objectives
1. You will begin Professional Development Plan.
2. You will learn how to save your documents in "Wordperfect 5.1" or "RTF" format.
3. You will learn how to send word-processing documents as attachments to e-mail messages.

Activities

1) Proceed to Module 7 First Year Benchmarks to (re)familiarize yourself with the attributes of a "Professional Development Plan" (PDP)

2) Using your favorite word-processor, send a draft of your Program of Study and Professional Development Plan to your Educ 6000 instructor as an attachment to an e-mail message. Your attachment should be saved and sent in "WordPerfect 5.1" format. If this is not an option available to you, save the document in "RTF" format. Please refer to Module 1. An Introduction to the Internet for additional information about saving documents in

Student Comments

Currently this course is completing its fourth quarter of delivery. Student evaluative comments to the course are positive and include such statements as:

A. "I think [the] class is a very good class, especially if I consider the people who helped us like, R_ and S_. I say thanks a lot for your patience and help. Our mentor has been wonderful and I thank you. I hope we all can still keep working together in any form to achieve our goals."

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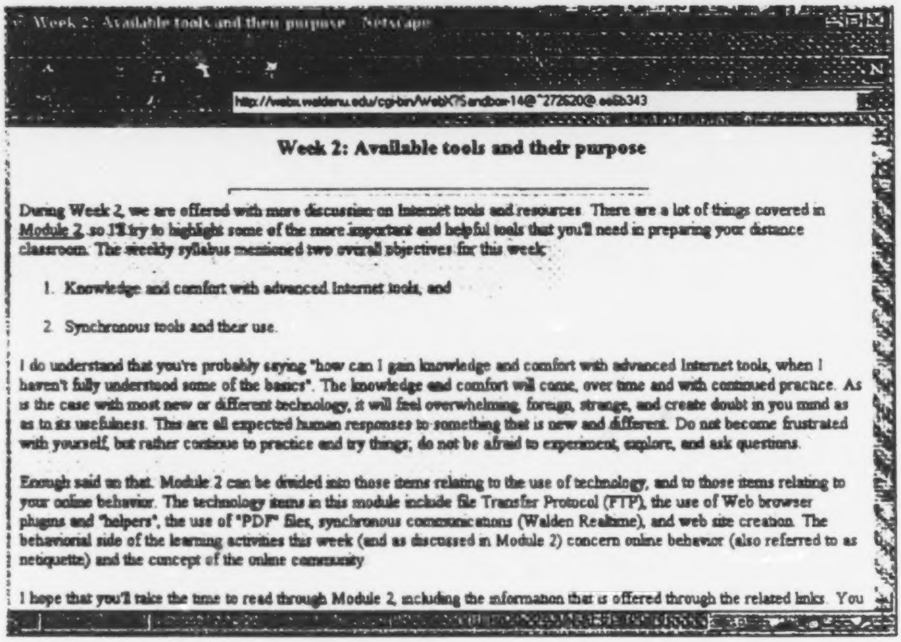

Week 2: Available tools and their purpose - Netscape
http://webx.waldenu.edu/cgi-bin/WebX?Sandbox-14@^272620@.ee5b343

Week 2: Available tools and their purpose

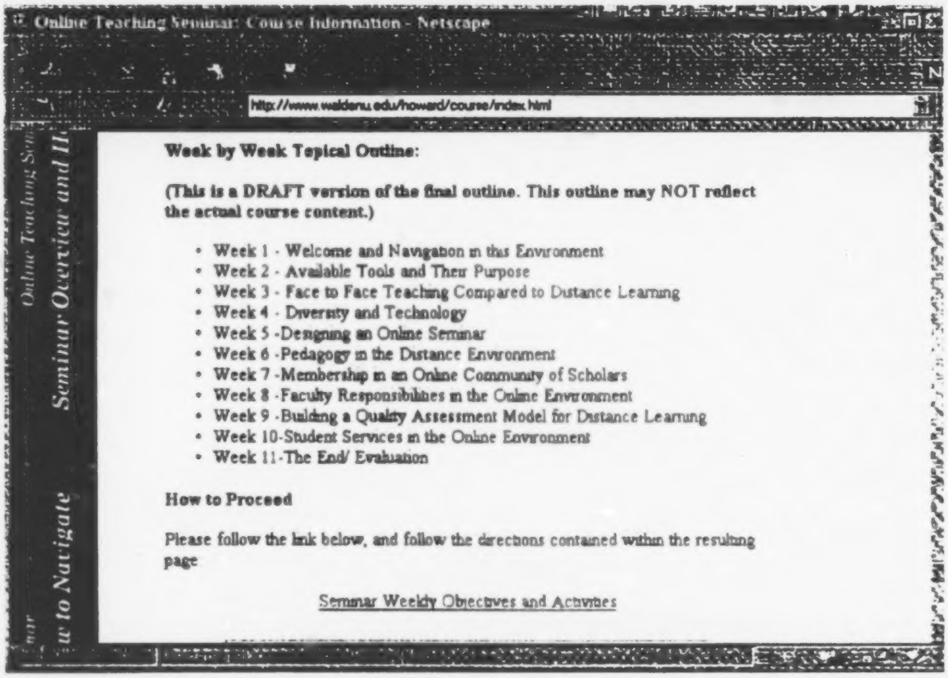
During Week 2, we are offered with more discussion on Internet tools and resources. There are a lot of things covered in Module 2, so I'll try to highlight some of the more important and helpful tools that you'll need in preparing your distance classroom. The weekly syllabus mentioned two overall objectives for this week:

1. Knowledge and comfort with advanced Internet tools, and
2. Synchronous tools and their use.

I do understand that you're probably saying "how can I gain knowledge and comfort with advanced Internet tools, when I haven't fully understood some of the basics". The knowledge and comfort will come, over time and with continued practice. As is the case with most new or different technology, it will feel overwhelming, foreign, strange, and create doubt in you mind as as to its usefulness. This are all expected human responses to something that is new and different. Do not become frustrated with yourself, but rather continue to practice and try things; do not be afraid to experiment, explore, and ask questions.

Enough said on that. Module 2 can be divided into those items relating to the use of technology, and to those items relating to your online behavior. The technology items in this module include file Transfer Protocol (FTP), the use of Web browser plugins and "helpers", the use of "PDF" files, synchronous communications (Walden Realtime), and web site creation. The behaviorial side of the learning activities this week (and as discussed in Module 2) concern online behavior (also referred to as netiquette) and the concept of the online community.

I hope that you'll take the time to read through Module 2, including the information that is offered through the related links. You


Online Teaching Seminar: Course Information - Netscape
http://www.waldenu.edu/howard/course/index.html
Online Teaching Sem
Seminar Overview and H
w to Navigate
nar

Week by Week Topical Outline:

(This is a DRAFT version of the final outline. This outline may NOT reflect the actual course content.)

- Week 1 - Welcome and Navigation in this Environment
- Week 2 - Available Tools and Their Purpose
- Week 3 - Face to Face Teaching Compared to Distance Learning
- Week 4 - Diversity and Technology
- Week 5 -Designing an Online Seminar
- Week 6 -Pedagogy in the Distance Environment
- Week 7 -Membership in an Online Community of Scholars
- Week 8 -Faculty Responsibilities in the Online Environment
- Week 9 -Building a Quality Assessment Model for Distance Learning
- Week 10-Student Services in the Online Environment
- Week 11-The End/ Evaluation

How to Proceed

Please follow the link below, and follow the directions contained within the resulting page

Seminar Weekly Objectives and Activities

B. "How does it feel to be at the end? I have loved this class and am glad to know it's pass/fail because I feel pretty stressed about my grades in my other classes... I'm sure I didn't do poorly, but it's been literally six years since anyone gave me a letter grade on anything! So I sit in the shoes of my students at the end of a quarter and remember yet again to think carefully about my practice because this is how it feels! :-) "

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C. "This class is a motivating class, and I liked it a lot, because it helped me when I was still lost in the process. I do not know how other classes will be but this class is a good class. Our mentor deserves a lot of credit for what is happening in this class, because when one cannot get information or answer for anything, this class will always be there. Registration, Professional Development Plan (PDP) and the Program Of Study (POS) are the sections I think were hard, and I think I still have to make sure that everything is covered."

D. "I can't believe I did all the computer projects. Instead of grading myself, I am going to give the mentor an A+ for creating a course so valuable. I learned so much about the most valuable tool we have... seeking information. Knowing where to find information is the most valuable connection I can think of. I hope I can accomplish my POS plan and I have a lot of support especially from the V.P. of Academic Affairs of my department and from the College President that I feel I can make it thru and most important. Thank you (mentor) for being there when I needed help."

E. "I think I did pretty well. I messed up on registration. I'm not quite sure what happened. I had to do late registration today. Hopefully, everything is okay and I will be able to start next quarter in EDUC 6150. I spent a lot of time on my PDP and POS, and I finally got it perfect. I hope everything goes as I have planned. This has been a great class!"

F. "This program seemed to meet my needs of becoming more informed about curriculum and of learning strategies that can be of help to the schools that I consult with. That it happened to be presented in an online format was secondary, in my case."

G. "I feel much more in touch with the people here at Walden as far as outside life and where we are at. I miss having more casual interaction with people at Walden – a virtual hallway isn't the same as a before class chat..."

H. "Interaction with other students has been very cordial, but most times it is only on the class forum. We should interact more, because the facilities are in Walden University to do that."

Certified Online Instructor Program

The new faculty orientation/preparation course is currently known as Technology Skills and Teaching Strategies in the Online environment. This course, upon completion of 12 of the 14 outcomes, will result in a Certificate for faculty. At Walden University all faculty are required to complete the course and receive the certificate to receive a contract in subsequent years. This online course is also 12 weeks in length, but covers several different topics than the student orientation course. Similar sessions include the navigation and technology tools topics. Unique sessions include "Building a Quality assurance Model for the Online Environment" and "Diversity and Technology," to name only a few. A sample pages from this course, including a page from the syllabus and an activity follow.

Comments from the final evaluation of this course included the following:

"I like the articles, they are stimulating to me, many times if I didn't finish I would download and take them home to read, I didn't want to miss any of it."

I like the ease of accessibility, lunch hour, late at night, always available to it, It is very critical to me to be accessible."

"I think there was too much reading and not enough activities."

"Some of the modules were excellent, but the ordering could have been better in my opinion."

"I liked most about this seminar was the wealth of information, the utilization of web resources, the facilitation of the instructor, the organization of the modules, save for module 6 which I believe should have come earlier. I particularly enjoyed the information on the Role of the Online Instructor."

Student Services

The last significant component of the Retention First initiative includes student services. During the 1997-1998 academic year the students services area of Walden University was re-organized. The new organization centered around student processes. Each major process the student experienced had a "process team" developed. These processes included recruitment, admissions, orientation, Start-up/retention, progress, and completion. Each process team has membership including an academic counselor, financial aid counselor, recruiter, and a representative from finance or records. These teams develop processes, monitor students, identify gaps and delivery of services and evaluate their successes in dealing with students. Each process team contributes to student success and satisfaction and therefore to student retention. The transition to this flat organizational model established ownership and responsibility for processes and success within the teams, and took place over nearly 18 months. Again, at this time it is still too early to tell if the re-organization is contributing to an increase in student retention.

Conclusions

Based on these and other comments it appears that students and faculty are quite satisfied with the non-credit orientation course. They were successfully able to navigate within the environment, plan a personal academic program, use technology appropriately for registration of courses, and create a skill set of appropriate success strategies for use within a distance environment. All the students in their course were able to complete the necessary outcomes to receive a Pass in the course. In addition to completing the required objective for the course student also experience creating an online community, and writing, library and critical thinking skills. Faculty are more critical of the application and the order of their modules, however they too seem to agree the information is useful and the delivery mechanism accessible.

In addition to the course comments University administration learned that re-ordering the sequence, closer monitoring of the new student/previous student mentor relationship, and faculty tracking mechanisms would also improve the new participants experience. While the first year of evaluation of *Success Strategies in the Online Environment* indicate overall satisfaction it is still to early to determine its actual effect on retention. Ongoing assessment of student performance and student satisfaction, and their effect on retention will continue in the belief there is a correlation between student support in the initial quarters of a new students graduate experience, quality of the faculty, and the overall success as a scholar.

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On-Line Community in Distance Learning: Its Value as a Predictor of Student Achievement

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This is the first in a series of reports addressing how asynchronous on-line learning and teaching, via electronic means, differs in practice and technique from conventional classroom learning. The report addresses whether there is a correlation between time spent on-line, during a distance learning managerial economic course, and student achievement as measured by the final grade point total. Findings from the small samples indicated that there was a strong positive correlation between academic achievement and time spent on-line. Further analysis of anecdotal data from the samples revealed that the sample students might not have been ready to learn via distance methods employing on-line technology.

Background

This paper is a think piece and my purpose for writing it is to participate and contribute, in a small way, to the discussions of distance teaching and learning. This paper contains propositions: statements concerned with the relationships of various concepts or an assertion of a universal connection of between events that have certain properties (Zikmund, 1997). It also contains first step research that may aid us in understanding best practices in on-line course development and implementation.

It is difficult, even for the most hidebound of us, not to be swept up in the miracles of educational technology. Technology is the most promising enabler of education since its migration from the monasteries to the public domain (Jacobs, 1999). At no other time in history has higher education promised so much to so many than at the present. We are at the dawn of distance learning. The basic technology for effective distance learning is well proven and no longer the sole domain of the technologically advanced. The fancy gadgets that add little to teaching and learning, or cannot be justified on the basis of cost, have been identified and should no longer distract us from our profession. This is not to say that distance learning has reached its zenith, but like most technology systems, we cannot afford to perfect it before we begin to learn how well it works (Penzias, 1989). The basic principles of teaching and learning have proved enduring and are of permanent value to our profession. "The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" (Chickering, Gamson, 1987) is perhaps the most widely known statement of teaching principles.

1. Encourage contact between students and faculty.
2. Develop cooperation between students and faculty.
3. Encourage active learning.
4. Give prompt feedback.
5. Emphasize time on task.
6. Communicate high expectations.
7. Respect diverse talents and ways of thinking.

Principles are "natural laws in the human dimension" which are as unchanging as physical laws (Covey, 1990). This suggests that we need look no farther than "The Seven Principles ... " to guide us in the development of distance teaching and learning.

Palmer Parker (1998) argues that the effective academic model is a holistic one and is based on the learning situation or community. The subject of inquiry is at the center of this model, radiating outward the subject is surrounded by a complex pattern of relationships between teacher and student, student and student, student and family, and most importantly, between teachers, learners and the subject. The subject occupies the center of attention, much as a fuse box does in an electrical circuit. The jumble of wires one can see before the

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walls are erected all lead to the fuse box. This graphic representation is synonymous with Palmer's concept of the the academic community. At its very best, community evokes the virtues of diversity, ambiguity, creative conflict, honesty, humility and freedom.

Palmer's ideas are oversimplified here, but they can be used to make a small but vital point. For teaching and learning to be effective, profuse communications are necessary to foster community and to put into practice the principles of effective education.

Distance learning and the enabling technologies provide greater communication opportunities, unbounded by time, geography, personal shyness and other inhibitors (Brown, 1999). This technology does not come to us without a potential downside, the details of which are beyond the scope of this paper. Assume that, in the aggregate, the pluses outweigh the minuses in the use of technology to foster the myriad of communications necessary to develop community.

Methodology

The framework for the discussion herein is based upon the empirical observations and primary source data gathered from Baker University. Distance learning in this paper specifically refers to teaching and learning asynchronously via the Internet. It includes chat features, e-mail, availability for streaming audio and video for one on one communications, bulletin boards and 24 hour on-line help. Our preliminary research looked into one question, in two classes of 15 and 11 MBA students, enrolled in an on-line Managerial Economics course. The first class of 15 students had volunteered to take the economics course on-line, while the second class had not. Substantive changes in the curriculum were made in between the two classes although this had little or no effect on student achievement, as measured by the total points students amassed during the course. One of the technology features of the software used was its ability to provide the time each student spent on-line during the course. During the process of reviewing student achievement in these classes, and having already seen the amount of time each student spent on line, it appeared that the students with the highest achievement spent the most time on-line. So on this anecdotal observation the first researchable question was formulated: Is there a relationship between the time the students spent on-line and academic achievement as indicated by the total points amassed during the course? Academic achievement was examined on an individual basis and on the basis of study groups. Study groups are permanent groups of three to five students formed for the purpose of collaborative learning and working together as a team. Study groups are required to meet once a week outside of class. The study groups in this research had been formed more than a year prior to their distance learning Managerial Economics course.

Data was collected from two population sets within each class; individual students and study groups. The three study groups, in this class of 15, had 5 members each and the class of 11 had three study groups of 4, 4, and 3 members each. The classes were separated by approximately one month. During this interstitial period an intervention was applied to the curriculum to address student objections. For example for the second class, the calculus component of the course was eliminated, students received an extra class to familiarize them with the software and they were pre-registered with the software.

A Pearson Product - Moment Correlation Coefficient score was calculated using the two variables student achievement and time on-line. This procedure was used on the two population sets, individual students and study groups in each class.

Findings

The research revealed that there is a strong positive correlation (.76) between the time individual students spent on-line and their achievement (Figure 1).

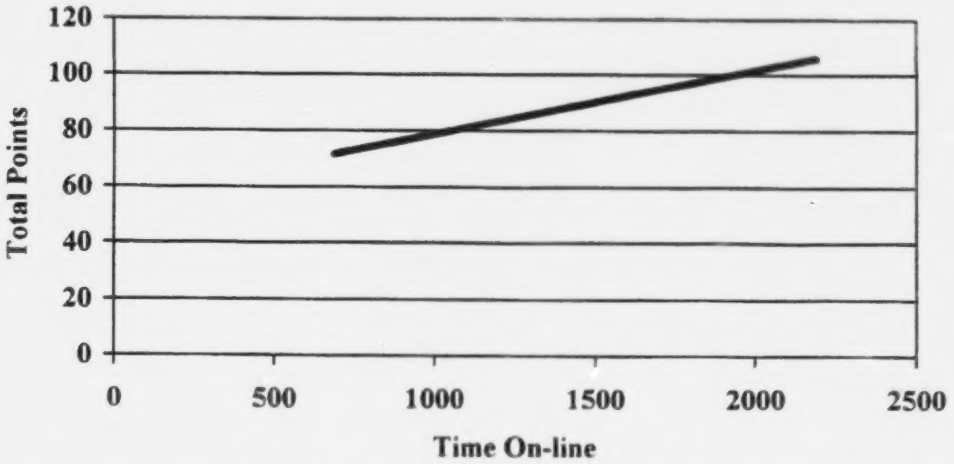

Figure 1. Relationship between time on-line and total points amassed by individual students.

The Pearson r score was calculated again, using the sum of the total amount of time each student in the study group spent on line. An even stronger positive correlation of .95 was found between time spent on-line and achievement of study groups (Figure 2).

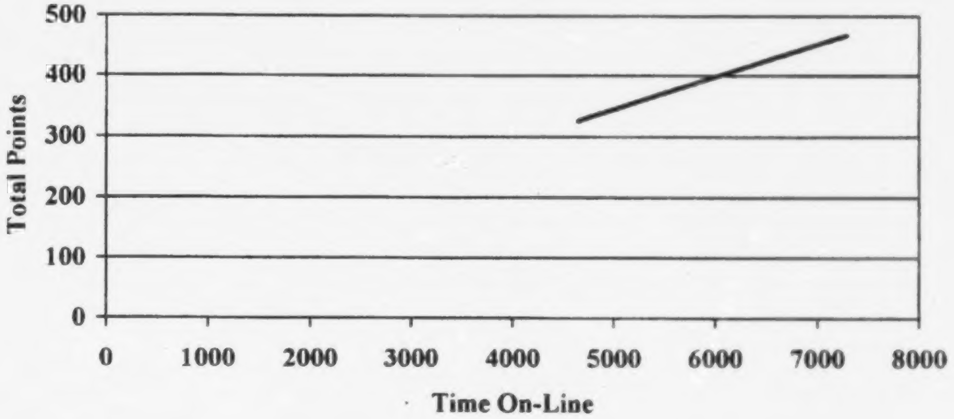

Figure 2. Relationship between time on-line and total points amassed by study groups.

Further data analysis revealed that, when examining all six study groups, four members of one study group who spent the least time on line, received four of the five lowest scores and had the lowest mean score. Five members of another study group who spent the most time on line received the five highest scores and had the highest mean score. The scores of the remaining four study groups, whose time on line was bracketed, by the highest and lowest groups, were consistent with this trend. That is, their scores were positively correlated to the time they spent on line. Based on these findings we can infer that the amount of time students spend on-line, during distance learning, will have an impact on their achievement.

Discussion

The strong positive correlations between time on-line and achievement suggests that time on line may be a reasonably accurate predictor of distance learning academic performance in the sample population. This finding is consistent with Parker's (1998) concept of community and the " Seven Principles..." This raises another question: Can time on-line replace traditional performance predictors? Historically, prior GPA and standardized test scores have been used to predict academic performance. In the new era of on-line learning however, we may have another, possibly more accurate, predictor. Is the amount of time spent on-line a better predictor of student achievement than historical indicators? This is the next researchable question to be investigated in our ongoing research.

Some other interesting issues emerged from the managerial economics classes discussed above. For example, the student end of course critiques clearly indicated that the students were dissatisfied with the on-line experience. The most consistent thing about their comments was their unusually large number and their stridency. Some examples of the student comments follow.

- "The course was too short"
- "There was not enough face to face with the instructor"
- "Economics was too difficult to teach on-line"
- "The text was too difficult"
- "The technology was not good enough"
- "I had to spend too much time on-line"
- "This is not what I expected"
- "The university refused to change the curriculum during the course"
- "I didn't learn anything"

In short, despite the fact the 15 of the 26 students were volunteers, on-line learning was not what they expected or wanted it to be. Many of these issues were addressed before the second class began which resulted in a corresponding reduction in the number of comments, but no improvement in overall satisfaction. End of course assessments indicated that students did no better or worse than students in traditional economics classes. The student comments considered along with the final grades and time spent on-line point to readiness to learn issues in this case. Our experience indicates that this is where the challenge lies for our institution and we suspect for the majority of those entering the world of on-line education. Let me end with some propositions arrived at through the experience of introducing our students to on-line economics.

Proposition #1: Community is critical to distance learning. The enabling technologies of distance learning can facilitate community and mitigate some of the common issues that are barriers to community, diversity, timidity, age, time, instructional resources and the distractions of extra-academic life.

Proposition #2: Community in the form of chat rooms, on-line office hours, and other technology enabled interactive activities has a positive effect on learning as measured by course grades.

Proposition #3: The amount of time spent in the on-line community may be a better predictor of academic performance than traditional measures.

Proposition #4: If we want technology to live up to its promise, we must find a way to solve the readiness to learn on-line problem.

Finally, why are teaching and learning professionals so interested in the promise of distance learning? As most have discovered it is not necessarily less costly (Lawton and Barnes, 1998) and it isn't a time saver in its current state of progress (Chizmar and Williams, 1998). Why then? This question is best answered by Benjamin Blooms work in 1978, well before the excitement about distance learning. Bloom found that:

- Favorable learning conditions occur when learning takes place within a learning community.
- Most students become very similar with regard to learning ability, rate of learning and motivation for further when provided with favorable learning conditions.
- Self directedness improves in learners who collaborate.
- A large proportion of slow learners can learn to the same achievement level of fast learners if the instruction and time are adapted to the students needs. When time and

instruction are adapted to student needs, approximately 80% of the students reach the same criterion of achievement (usually at the A or B+ level).

If we look carefully at Bloom's vision for collaborative education in 1978, it becomes apparent that distance learning technology, has the potential to facilitate the greatest good for the greatest numbers. It is this potential which provides a mandate for teaching and learning professionals to get involved and stay involved in the evolution of distance learning.

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Positioning Adult Learners for Success: A Descriptive Study of Lost Connections

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Introduction

Advances in technology have provided remarkable new opportunities for educators to engage and further develop and track the learning process. Dynamic means to research, organize and report information regarding each student's trek through their learning experience are now available, and have never been more essential. The Adult Higher Education Alliance has paid significant attention to the development of effective methodologies for working with adult populations (Alliance Conference Proceedings, 1998). It is appropriate that we now pay increased attention to how we assist student consumers to identify their educational needs, incorporate their perspectives with institutional and faculty assumptions, values, and approaches, and become informed critical internet uses (Alliance Conference Prospectus, 1999). Even as we take these steps to assure an appropriate educational milieu for the adult learner, administrative processes such as admission and student activity management must be designed as specifically to meet the needs of the adult learner.

The adult learning process is not necessarily linear, consecutive, or predictable. Lifelong learning is the reality of human development through the life cycle, and meeting these transitional needs should be a firm commitment for any program working with adults. Liberal admissions policies acknowledge the power of adult education to assist people who have "chosen to reach out for something new" (Weathersby, 1996). In attempting to assist students in achieving their educational goals, universities have begun to articulate transfer policies that in the end often complicate the admissions process. Over several years the authors have observed students being "lost" from their Adult Degree Program, and recently developed a research study to explore the causative factors.

Study Design

It was assumed that the student experience in admission and registration is a function of student perception of the process, the program environment and the interaction between the two. To begin to explore these assumptions the authors sought to make entry into the admission and registration experiences of students attending their adult degree program. Particular attention was focussed upon those students who had been accepted into the program, and were now no longer registered.

A convenience sample of students entering and enrolling in the program was sought and readily identified in a program subset. Specifically the study sample was of students who had been admitted, but had either not begun, or had begun and subsequently dropped out of their chosen major. As might be expected, this exercise resulted in increased attention to characteristics of the learners and of the program system itself.

The program system is located within Capital University, one of the oldest institutions of higher education of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Situated in a state capital in the Midwest of the United States, this small metropolitan college provides a curriculum that focuses on a liberal arts tradition, strong major and professional programs, and the development of both a personal and a societal ethos (Capital University Bulletin, 1999).

The Adult Degree Program of Capital University comprises three regional centers located on the main campus and in two other major cities. The Adult Degree Program supports the University's mission by providing adult students integrative advising and teaching in flexible learning environments that encourage self-directed and interdisciplinary approaches. Committed to experiential and lifelong learning (Capital University Bulletin, 1999), the Adult Degree Program is designed specifically for adult learners, typically over the age of 25, who have previous college experience or other significant training.

For the purpose of this study, a sample was required that clearly identified a group of students transitioning into a "new school" major. Capital University has a large, accredited Bachelor of Social Work Program located in each regional center. Entry to the Social Work Program requires a further admissions process beyond entry to the Adult Degree Program. Quality monitoring was already in place for social work students to meet evaluation requirements and satisfy accrediting body expectations. Social work majors located in a regional center provided an accessible and relatively homogenous set upon whom convenient detailed information was readily available.

The regional Center Admissions Director and regional Social Work Program Director collaborated to review the ten-year history of the regional Social Work Program. The academic years 1996-1997, 1997-1998, and 1998-1999 were chosen for study. Significant Program growth had occurred during this period, which similarly reflected advances in technology-enhanced learning in the Adult Degree Program. Social work student records for the periods above were reviewed electronically using the University's management information system. Simple demographic data identifying name, age, race, and gender were gathered. Women comprise the majority of students applying to the Social Work Program. Since it is a truism that women often have insufficient access to resources including childcare and income for education, information about marital and employment status were also sought. Data were coded and names removed to maintain confidentiality.

To better identify and study student attrition, a subset of the total student data was developed comprising students admitted to the Program, but no longer registered. These data were then further divided into two categories: 1) students who had been admitted, but never attended classes; and 2) students who had been admitted, completed at least one semester of classes, but subsequently dropped out of the Social Work Program. Manuscript records of these students located in the regional center were reviewed to confirm the electronic data, and to attempt to identify documented reasons for the status changes.

In the absence of an institutional record, a brief, informal telephone survey instrument was designed to begin to reach out to these students, and to uncover information about what had happened to them. Ten questions were developed intended to begin to clarify the reasons students were no longer in the Program. Students would be contacted by telephone, and after being informed that the purpose of the call was to gather information to strengthen the Social Work Program and the support provided to students, they were asked if they would explain why they had not begun or dropped out of the Program. Further questions asked students about their satisfaction with their decision, and requested them to identify ways the Program could have been more supportive. Acknowledging the extent to which adult degree programs have begun to develop and utilize technology-enhanced learning methods over the three-year time period under study, students were asked if they owned or had access to a personal computer to use for their education, and if the presence or absence of technology-enhanced learning had anything to do with their leaving. Since a Bachelor of Social Work degree is necessary for state licensure and the change in responsibility and compensation that accompanies it, current employment status and perceived need for further education were also explored. The survey was not pre-tested, and results must therefore be treated with caution. To encourage respondent candor, calls were made by the Center Director of Admissions who had previously had limited, if any, direct contact with students following their acceptance to the Social Work Program.

The Students

In order to determine what had happened to students who dropped out, it was necessary to describe the students in the regional Social Work Program. These students

(N=122) may be categorized as follows: female (88%), white (83%), and employed (71.3%) primarily in social service agencies (91%). Under half of the students are married (38%) with 24% reporting as divorced and 38% as single. The average age is thirty-nine years old.

The Admission Process

Students seeking entry into this regional Social Work Program at Capital University, Dayton Center, are first admitted to the University as a result of an admission interview and transcript review. Following the categories of the University information system, as students are admitted their records are entered in a university-wide database, and identified as applicant records with conditional admission status. After admission to the Social Work Program, the applicant status is changed to unconditional if all other requirements have been met. When an applicant submits a schedule request to register for classes, the applicant's record is converted to a student record on the University database.

The Withdrawal Process

The University considers a student who has not registered in three consecutive trimesters *withdrawn*. In some cases, students withdraw from the university formally by completing the appropriate university paperwork in person. More often, students seem to arbitrarily disappear and are withdrawn by administrative personnel organizing files. In either case, although paperwork documenting the withdrawal is filed as required, the formal documentation rarely provides much reason for the change in status, and the database record is generally not changed to even reflect the date of withdrawal.

The Sample

Limitations of the University admission philosophy and the electronic record arbitrarily excluded from the category students individuals who had applied and been accepted, but never registered for class. As the purposes of this study was to identify students who were no longer actively in the Program, and to discover the reasons they dropped out, electronic record review was supplemented by manuscript student file review. Fifty-two records were identified, and re-collated to develop two major categories: 1) admitted, not registered (n=40), and 2) admitted, registered and withdrawn (n=12). These two categories together comprised all students within academic years 1996-1999 who had been admitted to the Social Work Program at the regional center, but were not enrolled at the time of the study. Field definitions in the University information system account for the fact that records in category one are not included in the Program demographics reported above.

Findings

Review of records in category one revealed that thirty of the forty applicants who had been admitted and not registered were maximizing the articulation arrangements between local community colleges and Capital University, and could be expected to register within the next academic year.

The ten students in category one, who had been accepted to the Program but never registered, were initially contacted by telephone. Record review revealed demographics that appeared, in the absence of statistical analysis, to mirror the larger group of students who had been accepted and attended classes: students were female, white, married and employed with an average age of forty-five years, slightly higher than the larger sample. Of the six students who responded to the survey, five cited cost as the main reason they had not further pursued their education with Capital University. One student reported that she was no longer interested in the social work field.

Review of records of the twelve students in category two, who were admitted, registered and withdrawn from the Program, was conducted. Students were primarily white and female. More than half of the sample reported being single or divorced, and the majority was employed at the time of application. Of these twelve students, seven could not be contacted to respond to the phone survey: they were either no longer at the given work or home number, or had moved. Conversations with the remaining five revealed that three had intentionally left the field of social work, one had been frustrated by programmatic requirements, and one had been dissuaded by the cost of the institution.

Discussion

It has been the experience of the authors that academic information systems have developed to meet the needs of institutions in the traditional student. These systems not only ignore the needs of the adult learner, but act as a barrier to supporting their personal quest for education. The authors have identified what they perceive to be barriers existing within administrative processes that ultimately serve as the stimuli for withdrawal of adult students from academic course work. These barriers are categorized as student entry barriers, student activity tracking barriers and barriers to retention.

Student Entry Barriers

Although the study sample was very small, more than half the students who were contacted for interview indicated that cost was a factor in their decision to drop out of the program. While competitive, the tuition for this private university is higher than competition at the local state college. This, however, may be offset by the liberality of the articulation agreements that allow transfer of most credit from any regionally accredited institution. Although at face, there appeared to be no demographic differences between students who remained, and those who never began or left the Program, it is of note that those who were admitted and never registered were employed. A further finding of the phone interview was that although students perceived cost to be an issue in their decision, several had not even attempted to apply for financial aid. Full employment may not necessarily ensure sufficient discretionary funds for education. Federal and state spending patterns in the last decade have changed significantly by diverting money away from need-based grant programs to fund loan programs and tax incentives (Hartmann, 1999). Students, who are often paralyzed by the complexity and futility of the federal financial aid process, may be unwilling to go into further debt for higher education.

No students interviewed reported that technology was a barrier to education. Yet eleven students could not be traced. Without their voice, conclusions about technology and cost above cannot be definitively answered.

Student Activity Tracking Barriers

The data-management system imposes procedures requiring that students be categorized as registered or not registered. This makes it impossible to generate an accurate picture of the Social Work Program's student population, and to track students should they take time off at any point through the continuum of their entire educational experience. The current database is event-focussed and thus ignores the complex processes of normal adult learners' lives. It is a barrier to the fluid tracking of what happens to our students.

This regional program functions predominantly to support BSW degree completion for associate degree graduates from five regional community colleges. Due to positive relations with these excellent regional community colleges, social work students are recruited early in the course of their associates degrees which are typically in human services, mental health technology or social work, and may formally apply several years after their initial contact with the Program. The recruitment process is detailed, and personalized, including visits by the Center Admissions Director and regional Social Work Program Director to students in their community college classes, and meticulous, detailed pre-admission degree planning. Standards in the "feeder colleges" are high, and, for those who meet admissions criteria, transition from community college to undergraduate school is facilitated.

Under the University information system, it was unclear which records were student records, which were applicants who had yet to register, and which were students who had actually withdrawn from the University. Further, when students did formally withdraw, as noted before, the hard-data were often not recorded on the University database, making it nearly impossible to ascertain from the University record exactly who was in and who was out of the Program at any given time.

Barriers to Retention

Although the Adult Degree Program prides itself on individual advising and personal attention, recent growth had made it difficult for an individual advisor to keep track of each student's progress through the Program in timely fashion. As a result of the limitations of the University database, the Program administrator was unable to obtain accurate reports of student activity. It remained then the responsibility of the center support staff to alert the advisor of student statuses. Under the current system, this alert does not occur until the student has not registered for two consecutive semesters. Clearly, at that point it is too late for the advisor to provide the follow-up and support needed to help students through yet another transitional period in their educational continuum. In its present configuration the University management information system is less than adequate to maintain accurate longitudinal student data. This was an obvious yet vitally important finding of our study.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This brief study was intended to begin to ask questions about what happened to students in an Adult Degree Program who were admitted and then either did not attend, or were admitted, registered, attended and subsequently dropped out. In each case, connections were made between students and the Program, only to be severed subsequently for reasons that were never documented. Developmental theory reminds us that education is a process and not an event, and that adult education is predicated on the notion that learning is a life-long endeavor. The process of undertaking higher education as an adult taxes many levels of human resources. Many, sub-steps are involved that demand investment of time, money, planning, and sheer human energy. Arrangements must be made to accommodate the changes in lifestyle that a return to school inevitably demands. For these reasons the course of an adult student's "academic path" may be uneven, with many curves, pot holes and pit stops.

Institutional information systems that were developed originally for traditional students and then utilized by adult education programs, may be unsuited to track the course of adult learners. The outcome of this system deficit is not only shortage of information for research studies, but more importantly shortage of information on adult learner status. Such information, in the hands of a competent advisor, could better facilitate the adult student's continued path to success. Academic information systems must be developed to support the adult learner by providing accurate, longitudinal information. Appropriate and timely student support is an essential ingredient of an effective adult learning program.

Our University information systems were found to be inadequate to track student attrition. They were not intended to do so. Yet retention is an essential fact of academic life. This is true for reasons that go beyond FTE counts and the appropriate calculus of student enrollment and fiscal stability. Paramount to the notion of life-long learning is the responsibility of adult degree programs in preparing adults for this process. Our information systems capture events: they do not capture processes. The question of what new connections, among students, instructors, and administrators, are made possible by the emergence of evolving instructional technologies cannot be fully answered without similar attention to administrative technologies that may make parallel connections.

This direction of inquiry may be less than popular even for those committed to support the adult learner. For many, advising can be a chore, an unwelcome distraction from the business of teaching. Where is the boundary between the pedagogical and the counseling relationship? Who has time to follow their students outside the classroom? When is it appropriate to do so? No information system, human or electronic, is more powerful than the data entered. Instructor/advisors and administrators must work more closely if we are to hear our students and ensure their success. Ah yes, but these are adults who make their own decisions, so why should we meddle in their affairs? Perhaps.

The fact is that as our study indicates, we don't know much about our students. We don't know what is happening to them. We have little information. More sophisticated student tracking is required, and this may be best achieved through a matrixed instructor/advisor/administrative role. The Adult Degree Program of Capital University is presently exploring such a model.

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Introducing Technology to Adult Learners: A Course Model to Build Skills, Awareness of Learning Styles and Transformative Learning

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Introduction

While colleges and universities across the world are competing to attract adult learners to a vast array of distance learning programs, many programs catering to adult learners continue to attract and find new students entering our programs who are not part of the "wired" world. Many programs designed to attract the nontraditional learners twenty years ago or more are now faced with the need to "upgrade" to accommodate the "wired" world and the potential market of computer-savvy adults who have crammed the chat rooms of the Internet. Yet, we continue to see learners interested in completing degrees that were started many years ago before the Internet and personal computers were taken for granted as a part of everyday life.

No doubt the media has played a huge role in making our potential adult learners aware of the need to be computer literate. Articles such as "Computer Market Faces Gender Gap" are featured daily in newspapers, and clearly state that "households without computers face an educational and economic disadvantage in a world rapidly becoming high-tech" (Geewax). Learners themselves face the reality that when they need to change careers they are perhaps short on skills when computers become a requirement of a new position in the workplace. But yet many are fearful to take the step into the high tech world.

The adult learner's ego is often slow to admit such deficiencies today, but when new learners re-enter college programs, computer expertise is an expectation for success in the program, regardless of whether it is a face-to-face class situation or some form of a distance learning program. In the admissions process or initial college composition courses, the inability to use computers for word processing frequently surfaces. In addition to the need to use a word processor to produce an academic paper, the reality that few libraries function anymore without the use of electronic databases and catalogs for research. This adds still another dimension of computer literacy that is needed by adult learners who may have last stepped into a library when the card catalog was housed in a mahogany case. This lack of computer expertise may be seemingly conquerable in the eyes of an instructor, but can quickly be perceived as a major barrier in the mind of the adult learner. Often it is difficult for an instructor to take time from the content focus of the course to help learners get up to speed with the productivity tools needed to enhance the learning experience.

Judith Boettcher of CREN states that this problem will not disappear in the next century. "Access to computing and to the Web will be virtually universal in another five years. But the basic economic model, that some will have more, will still be true. The good news is that basic computing power will be in the hands of all; the bad news is that it will be greater, more convenient, and more customizable for some than for others." The inequities of access to computer technology will continue. This will continue to make it even more critical that college instructors be prepared to offer ways for adults to become computer literate for success in the increasingly technological academic world. Simply put, "the skills of the digitally literate are becoming as necessary as a driver's license" (Gilster, 2).

The Road to a Solution to the Problem

The Cleveland Center of Capital's Adult Degree Program is located in the heart of downtown Cleveland, Ohio. We attract a diverse population of adult learners. Some individuals are seeking to complete degrees in a field of business, while others are in the midst of mid-life career changes to areas such as social work. Mirroring the demographics of similar programs nationally, a high percentage of our learners are female, over the age of 40, and single parents. The ability to own and maintain a personal computer in their homes continues to be cost prohibitive even in a booming economy for many, so our computer lab in the Center is frequently filled with learners working on assignments during the day and early evening hours. The need to provide many of our learners with basic academic computer literacy skills has become obvious. The question is, how it should be done? Any form of computer training can sometimes be a "hard sell." There were practical issues as well as pedagogical issues to consider.

At first the workshop approach seemed to be a reasonable solution. Since we are a small, private liberal arts institution, with relatively high tuition, we really did not want to charge more for a series of workshops. Learners would be paying very little (if anything) for such training to make it attractive. However, a "free" class seemed to imply that if it did not have a high monetary cost, the value to be derived from participating in such sessions would be minimal in the eyes of participants. We felt that if students were to be required to pay for a course they would have a greater vested interest in the learning and success to be derived from the learning experience. In short, from the learner's perspective, a course that requires payment of tuition as a regular credit-bearing course will be more beneficial than a series of low-cost workshops. There is still a perception in the eyes of adult learners that "you get what you pay for" when it comes to education. It was decided that if the course could be developed as a two credit, rather than three credit course, the cost would be less, but tuition would still be a factor, thus making it a serious academic venture for the participants. Similarly, by making the content of such a course relevant to improvement of the learner's productivity in the academic environment, the value of investing the time in taking the course added to its perceived value.

In considering the pedagogy, Tomei states two approaches, "concentration" and "infusion," are useful strategies in teaching computer skills to adult learners. The concentration approach "advocates a single course to introduce the necessary elements of technology-based instruction." Technology infusion, on the other hand, "occurs at the precise time when the skills and tools are required by the adult learner to satisfy other learning objectives." This method is suggested as useful in technology-based instruction courses such as doctoral programs. Infusion seems appropriate for adult learners in the sense that the learning can be quickly used within the context of the course content. However, we felt that at the undergraduate level where learners are frequently struggling with content, this approach could add more frustration and perhaps even the perception of another barrier to learning.

The desired learning outcomes for this course were another consideration. Having previously taught an introductory business computer course, as well as several adult learning courses, I was well aware of the desired computer skills that should be taught in a more generic course, as well as the need for critical thinking and analytical skills. The Adult Degree Program faculty recently embarked on the revision of our adult learning core courses. This made it important to focus on how the computer could be used to enhance the learning process in our program, as well as to develop critical and reflective thinking skills of our learners.

Jonassen's approach of using computers as "Mindtools" served as the general foundation for the overall theme of the course. His theory is grounded to a great extent in Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. "When students work with computer technology, instead of being controlled by it, they enhance the capabilities of the computer, and the computer enhances their thinking and learning... computers should be used as tools for helping learners build knowledge; they should not control the learner" (Jonassen, 4). This approach makes a great deal of sense when working with adult learners who are fearful of technology. They need to build a sense of ownership in their learning while simultaneously building computer skills to enhance their learning productivity and empower them as budding scholars. His theory includes using the computer to develop critical, creative and complex thinking skills.

When working with adult learners, "learning about computing should be situated in the act of using the computer to do something that is useful, meaningful, and intellectually engaging. If the task consists of something that is relevant to the learners or important to their educational lives, students will learn and comprehend more about the computer than they will from memorizing definitions" (Jonassen, 9).

On the surface this appears to contradict Tomei's concentration approach, but by melding the computer skills to educational projects, adults will be able to connect to the learning. Still this does not require the learners to be totally "infused" in content as Tomei suggests. The natural place to do this seemed to be in the context of an "adult learning" course in our program where the skills could be connected to learning objectives of the course and adult learning theory.

The Course

The basic computer skills needed for success in our Adult Degree Program include: word processing (for producing academic papers and other assignments), spreadsheets (to develop degree plan grids), e-mail (to communicate with instructors and peers), Internet research and electronic library research (for work in the major as well as the capstone research course), and critical thinking. Additionally, basic computer literacy and a general introduction to use of the World Wide Web were necessities. Our program uses an abbreviated delivery system for classes based on an independent study model. (Six classes of three-hours each for a three credit hour course, so a two credit hour course would need to meet only four times for three hours, or some similar configuration of twelve contact hours.)

During the current term the syllabus for the course is based on four meetings, and will be shared in the presentation of this paper. The basic content of each meeting was:

Meeting 1: Basic computer literacy and terminology; word processing using Microsoft Word.
Meeting 2: Spreadsheets using Microsoft Excel.
Meeting 3: Introduction to Internet, World Wide Web, and E-mail.
Meeting 4: Internet/Electronic Library research and evaluation of sources.

Sample assignments will be shared in the presentation. Each session includes a substantial homework assignment that requires students to use and build upon the skills taught in that particular meeting. The context for use of the skills is practical and they are encouraged to extend their learning to include its use in assignments from other courses they are currently taking in our program.

The use of computer-mediated communication is emphasized throughout the course. This is an important "Mindtool" according to Jonassen. (It is worth noting at this point that he does not feel word processing qualifies as a Mindtool because it does not involve critical or creative thinking that significantly improves or enhances the thinking of the learner to result in making him/her a better writer.) However, when we consider that the use of word processing skills is an important part of computer-mediated communication, there is certainly value in being certain the learner has a grasp of basic word processing concepts for the purpose of communicating ideas and thoughts to other learners and instructors. The specific activities involved with computer-mediated communication are information retrieval, electronic mail, and computer conferencing. Each of these activities is included in the course assignments throughout the term.

Another area of discussion during this course has been related to learners' self-assessment of their learning styles. While it is entirely appropriate to discuss Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory in this context, it is also useful to discuss aural and kinesthetic learning styles and how it is sometimes necessary to compensate for weaknesses in some areas by developing skills in another. Again, this discussion lends itself to transformative thinking regarding one's own particular strengths and weaknesses as learners and the issue of being productive in the learning process.

Finally, the learners are asked to make the intellectual leap from performing the computer activities to actually thinking about how those tasks enhance their own learning abilities or productivity as learners. This topic was discussed in class sessions and then carried through to e-mail discussions and a final written assignment. Another approach to making this transition is through journal writing exercises using the word processor. This is especially useful for those learners who may not yet be confident enough to share their thoughts via e-mail/conferencing. By reflecting on the use of the technology as a part of the learning process, adult learners begin to take the first steps to transformative learning. Palloff and Pratt report that this process encourages learners to "learn about learning through the use of technology" and that this self-reflection is valuable in promoting transformative learning.

Conclusions

Since the course is being offered for the first time this semester, there are questions remaining for our program. The actual students' learning outcomes can only be estimated at the time this paper is delivered. A mid-term self-assessment instrument will be administered prior to this conference and the results shared in the presentation.

There are several areas of concern including learners' computer skill development, their development of self-confidence in their own computer skills, self-confidence in their personal productivity as learners, self-confidence and willingness to share reflections. In some cases, it is possible the outcomes of the course will not be apparent for several terms into the future.

Finally, it remains to be determined how to deliver this course most effectively in terms of the frequency and length of class meetings with learners. It is entirely possible that the four, three-hour meeting model will be too intense. Fortunately there is flexibility in our scheduling to experiment with other options for delivery of the course. Hopefully learners will find the course impacts their lives far beyond their college studies, making them more productive as parents, workers and citizens in our evolving digital society.

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Distance Learning: Opportunities and Challenges for the Adult Student

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Faculty from a variety of disciplines discuss the opportunities and challenges that online distance learning represents for the adult student. Mercy College has pioneered in providing educational services to a student body diverse in age, educational and cultural background attending classes at a variety of campuses and sites. In recent years selected courses and programs have been offered via distance learning. The Distance Learning program makes use of computer software which supports the infrastructure of coursework, e-mail, and an electronic discussion forum. Mercy's approach to distance learning makes particular use of the discussion forum emphasizing the interactive conferencing facility. Faculty will discuss curriculum, integration of Internet resources, assessment (including accreditation), and issues of transferring courses and programs to cyberspace.

The Teaching-learning Microcosm of the Upper Level Social Science Course

Medical Sociology seemed to be a near ideal candidate for offering on distance learning. It is a major course taken by Behavioral Science majors and a number of other students interested in a variety of health oriented fields. Of the students taking the course online many worked in health care in some capacity or had long term career goals which focused on the health care field. It has an array of excellent texts available from which to select. The subject matter contains much interesting, timely material which lends itself to a problem oriented format making good use of the discussion forum. There are many appropriate Internet resources that can be made use of for assignments. Students are currently sent to the World Health Organization www.who.int, to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cdc.gov and the New York State Health Department health.state.ny.org for global, national and local health information.

Pedagogically two key decisions were made in planning the course for an online version — to rely heavily on the framework and organization provided in the text and to refocus the course to be more problem or inquiry oriented. Each module was designed (with approximately one module per week) around questions to be answered. The key assignment was for each student to read the chapter(s) for the week, the teacher's mini lecture and notes, answer a question, and post 3 comments on the answers of other students. In addition each student was to do a term paper. The students were also requested to post their topic and a summary of the paper in the forum.

Student participation and reaction. In each section there were students who immediately logged on, introduced themselves, and chatted with each other. The students read the welcome message which indicated the course requirements, looked at the outline, read the information about the first module and selected a question to answer. This arrangement was used to encourage students to immediately log on to find out about the course.

The second week students took the questions and immediately supplied answers and comments. Basically a noticeable rhythm emerged — the week's material would be posted on Sunday or possibly Monday. The early birds would post answers in the next day or so with the latter portion of the group following up Thursday to Saturday. Then another cycle would begin. What about the students who are on the course roster but do not log on? Various outreach strategies were employed — a telephone call, an "early alert" report to the Advising Office, a idsemester individual grade report and a remainder of the grading process: "Yes, the weekly uestions would count — they would determine the participation component of the final grade."

It may not be evident to all students in selecting the option of taking a course on Distance Learning that it makes very heavy reading as well as writing demands. It rewards students with good work habits and convenient access to a computer. Students who did not have personal access to a computer did not participate as frequently. (Access to a printer is also important). What worked best was to check in on the forum several times a week if not every day. Clearly this type of system works most effectively for students who are self-motivated, who do what is necessary to get the text promptly, and who are willing and able to set work schedules for themselves.

For faculty it is an interesting experience in itself to offer a course via distance learning. If you enjoy using Internet and e-mail, you will probably find offering a course via Distance Learning congenial. Obviously you have to be able to express yourself comfortably in written form. Although, voice input is very close, typing is an entry gateway.

Will Distance Learning replace the face-to-face classroom? Distance Learning has already become an important adjunctive to classroom-based courses as well as an important delivery system in itself. Online courses provide considerable individual and class communication and interaction. But many students need the direction, structuring and face-to-face feedback that class meetings provide. Just a few years ago it may have seemed that Distance Learning would develop as a small parallel universe of the higher education landscape — somewhat like Sunrise Semester. Now, it is evident that Distance Learning will have a significant role in higher education. This is a result, due, in no small measure, to the participation of the adult student.

Special Issues of Teaching a General Education Mathematics Course Online

Introduction — Courses that are offered in a distance learning format are especially well-suited for adult learners and provide educational opportunities for them. This section will focus on the online delivery of a general education mathematics course for students with college majors and career aspirations that do not require the material in a college algebra or precalculus course.

Student Selection — It is of paramount importance that students are carefully advised before signing up for an online course. Students must be told what to expect as well as know that they are disciplined enough to handle a course without regular class meetings. To help students decide whether or not to take an Internet course, it is useful to have the course outline with requirements and grading policies included posted for them to see. Some facility in using computers is a plus but not necessary. Also to assist students a list of guidelines with suggestions for being successful in an online mathematics course are posted at the beginning of the class.

Getting Started — The first task for the instructor is to choose a readable textbook. For this general education mathematics course *Mathematics: A Human Endeavor* by Harold Jacobs is used.

The main components of the online course are a class announcement area, the class forum, e-mail facility, and assessment. The class announcement area contains the course outline, information about the required paper, a module for each week of the term, and test information. The instructor posts information in this section and students should print it out and keep it for reference. The most important part of the course development involves the preparation of the weekly modules. It is here that the new content, in particular the key concepts for the week, warnings about areas to be careful about etc. is presented. Also the specific off line and online assignments are given. The e-mail facility allows the instructor and students to send private messages as opposed to the class forum where everyone in the class sees the message. This is the way to inform students about their progress in the course etc. The class forum and assessment will be discussed later.

Special Concerns in a Mathematics Course — There are two areas that are of special concern in a mathematics class: first the mathematical anxiety that many students have and secondly the problem of dealing with mathematical notation over the Internet. To help alleviate some of the students' anxiety, for the first online assignment students make two postings to the bulletin board, but neither requires doing mathematics. One posting is a short introduction of themselves and the second is their reaction to a quote about mathematics being a universal language. This assignment has the added benefit of giving students more time to buy the required text for the course.

There are some difficulties in handling mathematical notation over the Internet and care must be taken. For example in order to represent 3 over 4x, it is easy to simply type 3/4x. However there is ambiguity in this expression since it may be interpreted in two ways, namely 3 over 4x as intended or else three-fourths of x. Mathematical expressions must be entered in an unambiguous way. One possible way to avoid the ambiguity is to type 3/(4x). Students who are familiar with scientific calculators or who have had some programming experience find it easier since there are similarities. It should be noted that a major concern is that the system be easy to use. Most word processors have superscripts and subscripts and some even have equation editors. However using such word processors requires students to compose their message in a word processor program and then to use cut and paste in order to bring their message over to the class forum or e-mail. This method is too awkward for students to use on a regular basis. In general for quick postings to the forum and e-mail messages most faculty and students are limited to standard characters on a computer keyboard. At this time there is no standardized way of using mathematical notation on the Internet.

Class Forum — Since there are no class meetings, it is in the class forum that a community of learners is formed. One of the purposes of posting an introduction the first week is to lessen the isolation that some students feel. Students participate in the class by posting in the class forum. Each week online assignments are given, and students are required to post two or more messages a week. Throughout the semester students post questions about the problems and other students help them out. Every couple of weeks a special assignment, which students discuss in the forum, is given to check for understanding or to add depth or enrichment to a topic. Also students post interesting information from their research in a folder titled, "Tidbits from My Research." The messages are organized into threads or folders which are created before the students start the course.

Internet Activities — One important advantage of an Internet-based course is that it is very easy for students to use the rich mathematical resources on the World Wide Web. Distance learning students are able to access sites simply by clicking on the address embedded in their course modules. In this basic mathematics class students use these World Wide Web resources as support and enrichment to the mathematical content of the course as well as a source of information for their research paper.

There are four main places in the curriculum that websites are used:

- the study of the works of the artist M. C. Escher
- the study of the Fibonacci sequence
- the module on statistics
- the paper which is a course requirement.

Of these the first will be discussed here and all of them in the presentation. The cover of the text for this course has an image of a print by M. C. Escher a Dutch graphic artist. His work, known for spatial illusions and repeating geometric patterns, is a rich source of mathematical ideas such as symmetry, reflection, and tessellations. The first Internet activity involves visiting an Escher site. Students view other works by Escher and learn more about him and his work. They then contribute to an online discussion in the class forum. This exercise gives students a sense that this mathematics course will be a little different from ones in their past, and they will probably be able to handle it.

Assessment Students are assessed in a number of different ways. Two quizzes, which count for 10% of their course grade, are posted over the Internet. Students may use their textbooks and notes but are not allowed to receive any help from people. The first quiz is the third week of the semester since it is important to identify students in need of extra assistance early in the semester. Then there are two proctored exams, a midterm and a final, counting for 50% of their grade. Students who live near one of our testing campuses take the exam there and students at a distance take it at a prearranged testing site near them. The remaining 40% is split between contributions to the class forum and the paper.

Conclusion

Distance learning is well suited for most adult learners, and these students appreciate the flexibility that such courses allow them. From the instructor's point of view some suggestions are to choose the textbook carefully, to provide as much structure as possible, to incorporate some Internet sites to support the curriculum, and to aim to develop a community of learners among the members of the class.

Integrating Computer Applications including Use of Online Learning as an Adjunctive or Supplementary Process in the Nursing Curriculum

Integrating online learning in a classroom course was initially conceived to enhance computer skills of graduate-nursing students. Such an approach was seen as a way to provide opportunities for students to experience successful interaction with the computer while sparking their interest, curiosity and creativity.

Students come into the nursing program with a wide range of computer skills. There are those who are highly skilled and those who have never turned on a personal computer. Those with fewer skills are usually returning to school after a long hiatus. They graduated from college prior to the personal home computer age and have not had to use a computer at work other than possibly entering and retrieving patient data. They have not experienced the computer as a useful resource for themselves, although they see it as very valuable for their children. They are anxious about returning to school and being expected to be proficient on the computer may discourage them from even starting. Yet they need computer skills and need them quickly if they are to succeed in school and advance professionally. The benefit of having a course online as an adjunct to the classroom experience is that the instructor can take advantage of many opportunities to enhance the computer proficiency of all students in non-threatening ways.

Graduate research was selected as an integration course because it occurs early in the curriculum and requires a number of computer applications. The course was put online and the class was held in a college computer lab. Students were paired – one with some computer proficiency with one less skilled. During the first class, students were introduced to the features of an online course. They registered online and were shown the course outline and assignments. They were introduced to e-mail and the discussion threads. Time was provided during class so students could send an e-mail to the instructor and leave a message about the course in a discussion thread. A course expectation was to send e-mail to the instructor and to participate weekly in online discussions outside of the classroom. If they did not have a personal computer, they could use the computers in the college library or in the labs. They also learned how to send attachments and began to send their assignments electronically. They were also expected to find and join a professional listserv that addressed their professional interests and concerns.

To further enhance interest and curiosity and to demonstrate Internet resources, each week students visited in the classroom Web sites relevant to the topic of discussion. Students were encouraged to explore the sites based on their areas of interest and then to share their findings with classmates. Examples of sites were professional nursing organizations and the National Institutes of Health. Outside of class students were expected to explore other sites and share findings either online or in class. Helpful Web lists quickly emerged. Students were encouraged to critique Web sites using selected criteria such as source, authorship, accuracy, currency, style, and links.

Another endeavor was literature searches. Students were given a live library orientation and then used Mercy's virtual branch library. Students begin their comprehensive project in the research course by developing a purpose statement and doing a literature search on the concepts in the statement. The statements were posted online and students began to assist each other in sharing valuable leads. Several students are planning to collect research data on the Internet and are examining how to protect human rights using this data collection approach.

Good outcomes have resulted from this experience. As hoped, the computer skills of all students in the class were enhanced. Participation in the online discussion groups also improved writing skills and helped in developing group cohesiveness. Students became much more comfortable with the computer and wanted more interactions. By the end of the course, students were purchasing personal computers or demanding equal time on the one already in their home. They have requested that more of their classroom courses be online so they can have the added resources that this provides.

Offering a Major Program of Study (Psychology) Online

In 1993, Mercy College began an experimental distance learning program called MerLIN (an acronym for **Mercy L**ong-distance **I**nstructional **N**etwork). Initially, only a couple of courses were offered online, but over the next three years, course offerings expanded to include all of the courses in the College's General Education curriculum. Courses offered online followed the same general course syllabus as was used in the traditional classroom version of the course. Most often, instructors were recruited from the College's full-time faculty.

The popularity of the MerLIN program quickly grew, and in the Spring of 1997, the College applied to the New York State Education Department for permission to offer full undergraduate degree programs online. The decision to offer online degree programs was based on the success of the MerLIN program and the recognition that, at the time, there were few undergraduate online degree programs.

Mercy proposed offering online degree programs with major concentrations in three areas: Psychology, International Business, and Computer Science. The Business and Computer Science programs were targeted because there were existing online associate degree programs were in these areas. The Psychology major was selected because it is the most popular undergraduate liberal arts program at Mercy and it seemed likely that there would be good support for the program both among our current students and potential "virtual" students.

The basic premise in Mercy's proposal for online degree programs was that the College would offer the same curriculum in both the online program and the traditional campus-based program. These programs would differ only in the way that the courses were delivered to the student. The programs would make use of the same faculty, the same courses and the same general course requirements. The proposal included an analysis showing that contact hours for the two programs would be similar, since students taking the online courses are required to participate actively in the course's online discussion forum.

In the Fall of 1997, Mercy received permission to offer these programs online. The same semester, The Middle States Association came to review the online programs. Middle States was primarily concerned with the following issues: the comparability of online and traditional courses, the qualifications of online faculty and support services to online students. Mercy's general approach to distance learning fit well with the Middle States' criteria for online programs. In addition, the College had begun the development of online student services including online Writing and Math Centers and a Library faculty liaison to assist online students with research projects. The Middle States review of these programs was very favorable and Mercy's online degree programs were accredited.

The online program in Psychology follows Mercy's approach to distance learning. The curriculum for our online program is the same as in the traditional campus-based program. Students majoring in Psychology must complete a total of six required courses including Statistics and Experimental Psychology, and six elective courses in Psychology. Courses are scheduled to allow students entering the program with an associate degree to complete the program in two years. Required courses are offered yearly - three each semester, and a variety of elective courses are offered on a two year cycle.

Most of the faculty teaching in the online Psychology program are full-time faculty members who teach the same courses online and in the traditional classroom. The full-time faculty is supplemented with selected part-time faculty members who have an interest in distance learning and prior computer experience. These faculty are supported by the Division Director for distance learning and by the Office of Distance Learning. The Division Director serves as a liaison between division faculty and the Office of Distance Learning. She recruits faculty and provides informal on-site support and training. The Office of Distance Learning provides faculty with both training on the MerLIN system and support in converting materials for online instruction. It sponsors formal faculty training in programs such as the UCLA Extension Online Teaching program and the Cybercorp seminar in Teaching Online. In addition, this office offers faculty development workshops on related topics such as HTML authoring and online teaching strategies; and schedules both "virtual" and actual meetings for online faculty to discuss problems and successful approaches.

Many of the courses in Psychology are easily adapted to the online environment. The classroom versions of these classes emphasize discussion and cooperative learning, and these approaches can be mirrored in the virtual classroom. In addition, the Internet has a wealth of resources in Psychology that may be used to supplement readings and online assignments. Psychology professional organizations and university departments offer excellent materials and activities that may be accessed by students. In addition, there are a large number of Psychology research sites where students can participate in ongoing research and some online Psychology laboratories where students can manipulate experimental parameters, and collect data for analysis. A number of e-journals have developed in Psychology and some Psychology print journals offer tables of contents or full-text articles online. The Mercy library also maintains full-text databases containing professional journal articles that are accessible online.

However, the online environment remains a challenge for some of the required courses in the Psychology curriculum. The text-based environment of the discussion forum does not easily lend itself to the display of mathematical symbols for the required Statistics and Experimental Psychology classes. As a result, students and instructors are forced to negotiate compromise notation systems to display formulas and homework assignments. This may lead to further confusion for students already struggling with difficult concepts. In addition, the required courses in Computers for the Social and Behavioral Sciences and Experimental Psychology are usually taught as hands-on laboratory classes in the traditional classroom. Translating these laboratory experiences to the online classroom has proven challenging. Some use of real-time sessions, perhaps with a video component, may be necessary to make these classes more effective.

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Cohorts in Cyberspace: Creating Community Online

Randee Lipson Lawrence, National-Louis University

In the Fall of 1998, the adult education faculty at National-Louis University implemented the masters program online. Our goal was to offer the same courses in our face-to-face program in a format that would extend our audience beyond our geographical area. This presented many challenges. Our program is cohort based. Students complete all of their course work together as a small group over a period of sixteen months. Collaborative learning is one of our basic philosophical foundations. Collaborative learning can be defined as students and teachers engaged in a process of mutual inquiry and reflection through the sharing of ideas, experiences, and perspectives. It involves exploring problems and issues through dialogue from the multiple viewpoints of the participants in order to arrive at a deeper level of understanding. In collaborative learning groups participants learn from their peers, teach their teachers and create knowledge together. (Lawrence, 1996).

Over a fifteen year period of working with adults in cohort groups, I have witnessed first hand the interactive learning communities that form when adult students are together over an extended period of time. Students begin to view themselves as part of a unit. The success of every member is as important as individual success. Could this happen online as well? The persistence rates for online learners are considerably lower than in face-to-face classes. One of the reasons cited has been the isolation students feel when they have only their computer for company.

This paper will describe how one university program intentionally created an online learning community. Areas to be addressed include: the residential workshop, the circle, the class lounge, commitment, communication, creating a safe space, telephone and e-mail, and the role of instructors.

Residential Workshop

A critical feature that we implemented was a three day residential seminar at the onset of the program. In the spirit of the Danish folk schools, this experience immersed students in a living/learning environment where they got to know each other quickly. They now had faces, voices and memories of shared experiences to give fuller dimension to the words on their computer screen in the months to come.

The Danish folk schools were established in the early 1800's by founder N.S. F. Gruntvig. The concept included a mutual exchange of knowing by students and teachers while eating, sleeping, working and playing together. Gruntvig advocated a process of "reciprocal teaching" where students and teachers were engaged in an ongoing dialogue that allowed them to gain insight into themselves and their world. (Warren, 1989) The opportunity to temporarily detach oneself from other life commitments and the continuity of the learning experience beyond the time parameters of a traditional classroom are among the benefits of residential learning (Fleming, 1998)

The primary goal of the residential experience is to give co-learners the opportunity to establish and develop relationships which will sustain them throughout their collaborative learning journey. A secondary goal is to immerse the students in the work of the first two course (taken concurrently online over an eight week period): *Adult Development and Learning* (introduction to the theories, practice and literature of adult learning and adult development), and Adult Learning in Groups (a grounding in collaborative learning process in the context of adult education), as well as critical thinking and its role in learning. The students participate in a second residential weekend at the end of the program to integrate their learning, share research and bring closure to their group experience. One participant described her experience with the residential workshop:

> "I feel that the residential experience is essential to any distance learning program. I don't think I would have felt as 'involved' if I hadn't bonded with my cohorts. Also, in a way I feel responsible for their learning as well as my own, since we are in this thing together. I feel as though we will sink or swim together."

It is important to be intentional about the learning experiences offered to the students during the residential weekends. It is not enough to simply bring people together for three days (Lawrence, 1999). One of the activities involved a group problem solving exercise where the participants were charged with planning a distance learning program. There was a wealth of knowledge in the group which was tapped into as ideas were shared, listened to, built upon, challenged and explored. This activity served the tri-purpose of identifying strategies for future online communication, team building and creating opportunities to observe and study group dynamic behavior. Another activity was a field experience based on the work of Lawrence and Mealman (1996). Students were engaged in a number of experiential activities designed to deepen awareness and work collaboratively.

As important as the formal activities of the residence were, participants highly valued the opportunities for informal learning outside of planned activities. These opportunities occurred during meals, on the porch steps, during walks on the grounds and during evening social activities. One participant reflected on the pace of life.

> "Perhaps part of my frustration... I will become overwhelmed with my schedule and duties-that my experiences may drown of neglect in a sea of deadlines and assignments and daily responsibilities. The residential weekend was designed to help take us away from the rat race for several days and have opportunity for reflection. The times for this that I enjoyed the most were when several of us would sit on the steps outside the center and talk. That was very relaxing, and conversation flowed naturally and freely."

The residential experience helped the students to form bonds which have sustained them through the times when they work alone on their assignments in the middle of the night at distant sites. As one student observed:

> "This cohort group at the retreat bonded quickly when they were able to meet each other and take advantage of body language in their getting acquainted process. This residential retreat provided the group a framework to comprehend future comments online."

Most students in cohort groups form close bonds through their many shared experiences. The residential seminar tends to accelerate this process. It is not known how long it would have taken the online group to bond or if they would have bonded at all had they not met each other through the residential workshop. As one participant observed:

> "Group dynamics would have been more "distant" had we not met face to face. It would have taken longer to achieve a comfort level with each other and perhaps we would have been more superficial."

The Circle

The circle has become a norm in adult education classrooms. Students and teachers sit in a circular formation which minimizes the hierarchy found in a traditional class. Everyone can see everyone else, so dialogue tends to be directed at one another, rather than to the instructor. While online students don't literally sit in a circle, the circle exists at a metaphorical level none the less. Baldwin (1994) teaches a process called circling where people gather to create community, make cooperative decisions and accomplish specific tasks. Participants enter into a social contract where they agree to support one another. A key concept of this circling process is known as "holding the rim" (p.234). This means that all members of the circle are equally responsible for the whole. If one member is struggling, the group shares the responsibility. The open space in the center of the circle is also significant. Palmer (cited in Sheridan, 1989) saw this open space as the place where students and teachers connected to one another's ideas and engaged in dialogue. In this way, an open community for learning is created.

The online students created their circle at the residential weekend. A small table was placed in the center of the circle and students were invited to place objects that were personally meaningful or symbolic of the group experience. One day a leaf appeared that had points equal to the number of students in the group. The students continue to hold their circle in their virtual learning environment.

Class Lounge

One way we facilitated a learning community was through the establishment of a class lounge online. This virtual coffee room allows space to discuss anything not related to specific course content. Conversations are similar to what occurs in break areas on campus. Students share family stories, worklife happenings, complain, ask for help, share resources such as interesting books or websites, and offer advice and encouragement to others.

Adult students often experience significant life events that challenge them. Cohort members have provided support and encouragement through several "crises" including computer crashes, car accidents, family health problems, moves and job stress. If anyone is struggling with the course work there is always someone to provide help. This support also occurs on an individual level through e-mail and telephone conversations. Additionally, they celebrate one another's successes such as a new job or promotion.

The lounge is also a vehicle to get to know aspects of the students which may not be revealed through the course discussions, such as their interests in astronomy or art or current events in their particular geographic community. A unique use of the lounge online was when one student posted digital photos of the flowers in her backyard so we all could see them. The lounge helps keep the group together since it is continuous and intact even as instructors come and go.

Commitment

Commitment is an important component of cohort groups. Lawrence (1997) identified four levels of commitment: commitment to self, to the group, to the individuals within the group and to the process. All levels of commitment are necessary for a successful online community to flourish. One participant referred to it as "conscious commitment" Online students need to make a special effort to "show up and be present."

This takes internal motivation and self-direction since there are no predetermined class hours. A student may decide to devote Wednesday from 8 to 10 P.M. to do course work, yet it is very tempting to get distracted by other commitments or decide one is too fatigued. When the commitment is conscious, the student will hold this time sacred.

Participants also need to commit to their classmates to share the work load during collaborative projects. When this level of equity is not present, the students who are doing the greater share of the work feel as if they are being taken advantage of. This feeling seems to be more acutely experienced in an online community since there are fewer opportunities to communicate one's needs and feelings.

Communication

One of the limitations of online communication is that it is text based only. Without the benefit of voice inflection (emoticans only go so far) the meaning of one's comments can easily be misunderstood. For example, a comment meant to be sarcastic may taken as serious and unintentionally offend. Knowing someone helps create a context to view one's comments. This level of knowing starts with the residential experience and deepens over time as the students take all of their course work together and share a multitude of experiences. As Lawrence (1996 p.49) discovered among face to face cohort groups, "As people got to know one another and shared their experiences, they developed insight into each other so that later, when comments were made, they knew more about where that person was coming from. They were able to respond to the whole person, rather than just his or her words."

On the other hand, familiarity with one's classmates can lead to "automatic vision" (Lawrence and Mealman, 1996 p. 35) where an individual assumes that he or she understands the meaning of a classmate's words and gives them only cursory consideration, which may lead to misinterpretation. In an online learning community, it is important to make a conscious effort to check out the validity of one's assumptions about the meaning of another's text.

In an online environment it is important to be aware of one's own emotions and how they are being communicated as well as the emotions of others. This takes more effort than in voice to voice conversation where one's feelings can be communicated by voice tone pitch or tempo. Emotions can be expressed by naming the feeling i.e. "that makes me so angry" or asking others to articulate their emotions.

The degrees of participation are significant in an online learning community. There is a major difference in the power dynamics as compared to a face to face classroom. In a classroom certain students (usually males) tend to dominate discussions leaving quieter, more reflective members feeling silenced and without voice. A major advantage of asynchronous communication is that one cannot be interrupted. In a classroom students are often stopped in mid sentence by someone who just can't wait to get their opinion heard. Alternately, they may lose their train of thought while waiting for an opportunity to get into the conversation. Online learners can take as much time as needed to consider and voice their responses. As one participant shared: "I have been able to express myself more freely than I believe I would have face-to-face." The participation of the quieter class members is increased which changes the communication dynamics in a major way.

The role of silence in an online environment takes on a different meaning. In a face to face classroom, one can be silent but classmates and teachers know from their nonverbal behavior that they are engaged. Silence online is more obvious, particularly when the group is relatively small. When one is silent online it is not known if he or she is reading but not responding, not logging on at all, or if the student has decided to withdraw from the class. In a cohort group students count on everyone's contribution. Learning from one another becomes an expectation. Students who do not participate, deprive the group of their knowledge. It is important to create norms and expectations around frequency of participation. Our students are required to post substantive responses at least 3 to 5 times a week and many log on daily.

Creating a Safe Space

Although it's important to acknowledge that not everyone will feel safe at all times, it is desirable to create a space where communication is honest and authentic. In a respectful environment, people feel free to self-disclose, disagree and engage in critical discourse. Students need to be able to trust that what they say will stay within the group. In an online community there are additional safety and ethical issues. Students' comments remain on the conference board for the duration of the course for all to view and review. It is important for them to know who has access to this information at anytime. If anyone, other than the students and course instructors is going to be viewing the text, their presence must be announced in the same way a visitor is invited to a face to face class.

Telephone and E-mail

Another way the community is maintained is through the use of telephone and e-mail. Students are often asked to work on collaborative projects in small groups. This can be a challenge if they live in different states. E-mail works well for sharing writing. Students also phone each other in order to have a "real time" conversation. A chat room is available for small and large group meetings.

At times students phone each other just to make contact, or to share their concerns. Communicating only online can be isolating at times. As one participant stated: "I think it's important to talk over the phone whenever you get a chance, just to make that human connection." It is also a way to clarify confusion that one may have over the meaning of a fellow cohort's textual response.

At the end of one course, the class had a teleconference in order to bring closure to the term. The students felt this was a valuable way to connect with one another although the logistics of coordinating multiple schedules across three time zones was not easy.

Role of Instructors

Online instructors have a significant role to play in creating and sustaining learning communities. Instructors can promote collaboration, creating opportunities for the students to get to know one another by encouraging them to share from their experience. Another strategy is to assign group projects which require students to work together in various configurations. They can encourage communication by posing reflective questions and giving students space to voice their views. This means that instructors need to be judicious about when to enter the discourse. When instructors comment too frequently, the students tend to dialogue with the instructor rather than with each other. Because the instructor is often taken as the voice of authority, despite our efforts to help students to view themselves as valid sources of knowledge, (Horton and Freire, 1990), discourse is often prematurely cut short. They accept the instructors views as truth and do not continue to explore alternative viewpoints. On the other hand, when instructors do not comment frequently enough, students wonder whether they are being heard.

I have learned that online students have a greater need for feedback from their instructors. In the absence of nonverbal cues and opportunities for informal commentary before or after class, instructors need to make a special effort to give feedback to students both online as part of group discussions and individually via e-mail or telephone.

Another way instructors can help to promote community is by involving students in the planning of instructional activities and sharing the leadership. One strategy that worked particularly well for us was asking each student to take responsibility for facilitating a discussion on one of the assigned readings. This shifted the responsibility for maintaining the community onto the students which is important since the students remain together for sixteen months whereas the instructors change every eight weeks.

Summary

This paper addressed the question of whether online students could create a learning community. I have concluded that while it is quite possible; it does not happen automatically. Instructors must create a climate that intentionally fosters collaboration. A residential learning experience at the start of the program that allows people to get to know one another and build collaborative relationships is critical. The supportive climate that is fostered during the residence needs to be followed up by ongoing maintenance to the online environment including the establishment of a class lounge to encourage informal dialogue, and attention to communication patterns: including participation, silence, emotion and power dynamics. Additional mechanisms for community include: establishing a safe environment for discourse, the use of telephone and e-mail to support textual discussion, and instructors who pay attention to online classroom dynamics, share leadership, give frequent feedback to students and do not dominate online conversations.

Online cohorts expand the definition of community from the local to the global arena. Learning opportunities are increased through the potential of reaching a more diverse population. As new technologies continue to evolve, the possibilities for creating connections among human beings are limitless.

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"I've Never Even Been to the Airport"

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Background

In the summer of 1996, a letter arrived at North Park from Ulf Finnhammar, Managing Director of the Järfälla Komvux, an adult education facility near Stockholm, Sweden. He asked if there was interest in becoming a "sister institution" to the Komvux, and invited our response. The letter was forwarded to me, Pauline, as the identified adult educator at North Park.

I immediately contacted Charles Peterson, Director of the Scandinavian Center. North Park has a 100 plus year heritage that is heavily Swedish, and several programs at the college are involved in regular exchanges with other schools in Sweden. This was the first invitation to North Park that targeted adult educators and adult students. Charles encouraged me to reply positively and "see what happened."

Within a month of my reply, I received a phone call from Kerstin Tuthill, a teacher English and Swedish as a Second Language. She would be in Indiana soon, and wondered if I had time to meet with her. We spent a full day together, talking and getting acquainted. From that initial experience, things developed rapidly. I accepted an invitation to visit the Komvux and did so in the fall.

In June 1997, the School of Continuing Studies hosted seven faculty from the Järfälla Komvux, Sweden, an adult education program similar to our community colleges. They had received a grant from the European Union that covered most of their expenses. We concluded the two week visit by drawing up an "Agreement of Cooperation," called "Lighthouse for Lifelong Learning;" it was signed by both institutions in September, 1997.

The purpose stated, "We agree to form a collaborative relationship between our two institutions to sow the seeds for life-long learning in a global perspective in order to: (a) help our students shift from a 'deficit mentality' to empowerment and self-valuing; (b) bring about cultural gains and language gains; (c) offer professional development for faculty and staff; (d) provide a link between the European Union (EU) for North Park and a link outside the EU for the Komvux; and (e) to create and enhance global awareness."

We identified five areas for collaboration:

- Student Exchanges (to begin in spring, 1999);
- Language learning (with correspondence on e-mail for students);
- Learning Disabilities (the Komvux has a Dyslexia Clinic);
- The Internet Group (to involve faculty and students in research and discussion of world news from two cultural perspectives);
- Global Perspectives on Business/Economy.

The following experimental course was devised:

Topics in International Study (3 semester hours, elective credit):

North Park University, through the School of Continuing Studies, encourages adult students to engage in study of the implications of the global world. In support, this course offers preparation for study in a specific international location, then a two-week "executive seminar," followed by at least one class session and a reflection paper. Specific areas for both theoretical and experiential inquiry are chosen from these three: the global economy, multicultural realities, and human service delivery.

Reason for Offering Course:

North Park University agreed to participate in "The Lighthouse for Lifelong Learning," a collaborative effort between the School of Continuing Studies and the Järfälla Komvux, an adult education program located northwest of Stockholm. One of five key points of collaboration is a student exchange; they plan to send 10-12 students here, and they expect to receive a similar group from North Park. Preparation for our group's two week

> visit will require students to attend four class periods prior to the exchange. During the four class periods, language study, discussion of the global economy, and study of human service delivery in the host country will be provided by appropriate North Park faculty. Resources of NPU's cultural centers will also be utilized. The topic areas are appropriate to the majors in the GOAL Program from which the North Park students will be chosen. All registrants will be screened through an application process for a minimum of a 2.5 grade point average and completion of half or more of the major.

The model is envisioned to be applicable in a number of international settings, including Mexico (Morelia), where an "executive seminar" program is available. Preparation for the exchange would begin during quad four of spring semester 1999. The exchange would be scheduled in early May, with follow-up completed by the end of June. The exchange would be limited to 12 students. Preparation and follow-up would be provided by a team of instructors drawn from Business, Psychology, the Cultural Centers, and the School of Continuing Studies.

The Exchange Experience – Fall 1998 - Summer 1999

Who We Were

Initially 12 students from GOAL and North Park University's Center for Management Education (CME) expressed interest in this course. Work and family commitments reduced our number, and ultimately, six GOAL and CME students were able to make the commitment. They ranged in age from 32 to 50. They were diverse in gender and race. Employment backgrounds varied from currently unemployed to corporate middle management. Overall, previous travel experience was limited, covering the range from having never been to the airport to repeated trips to Europe. All were at least half way through their course of study at North Park University (NPU), but came from different majors and cohorts. The level of emotional and financial support each received from family members varied greatly. For some this course presented an additional financial burden requiring extra student loans. Childcare and elder care presented challenges for others. Another met open family opposition to the travel portion of the course. In general, the students expressed that this was a once in a life time experience worth the extra burdens.

Two faculty were asked to teach the course and accompany the students for the two week travel experience; however, because of a medical condition, only one (Koby) met with the students during the preparatory sessions and actually traveled with the students.

The Swedes Arrive, March 28-April 8, 1999

Järfälla students were to be the first arrivals in this exchange. E-mail contact between participating Järfälla and NPU students was established in the fall of 1998. Though limited on both sides by time commitments and student interest, this initial contact provided an opportunity for GOAL students to express some of their apprehension about being strangers in a strange land and to find out that their counterparts felt pretty much the same way. It also helped to break the ice when the Swedes arrived.

Ten Swedish students, ranging from their early 20s to mid-50s, were accompanied by two Komvux faculty members. The students had a variety of projects identified, including the business of college sports, grocery marketing, substance abuse rehabilitation programs and women's basketball. A special area in the Komvux Student Learning Center had been set aside for the display of their final projects when they returned. An assortment of display methods were utilized, from photo essays on poster board to power point presentations.

Preparation for the North Park student trip to Sweden, May 8-22, 1999

In addition to e-mail contact, GOAL students received reading assignments focused on issues of diversity between Swedish and American culture, Swedish history, and language.[1] Students were also directed to specific websites, including that of the Swedish Embassy.[2]

As part of the four pre-trip classes portion of the course, GOAL students were required to prepare and host a welcome event for the Swedes. Their first class session was divided between planning and hosting a "Mini-Taste of Chicago" held the second night of the Jarfalla group's arrival. This provided both groups with the opportunity to put e-mail addresses to faces. It also provided students the opportunity to set up extra curricular activities. As available, GOAL students joined the Swedes for some of their regularly scheduled events during their ten-day stay.

The second class session was a joint discussion period, which was held at the end of the Jarfalla group's stay. The Swedes were asked to give their opinions and observations of their Chicago experience. This was followed by a question and answer session wherein each group got the opportunity to speak. The reflections provided by the Swedes were often surprising to the GOAL students. The friendliness and warm invitations of their counterparts also surprised them. Calendars were checked and appointments were made. The GOAL contingent would not be cast adrift upon their arrival in Stockholm.

On Our Own Again

Once the Swedes had returned home, e-mail contact intensified and interest in all things Swedish grew. GOAL students found a web site giving the daily Stockholm weather report. Newspaper and magazine articles on Swedish current events and television and radio pieces on Sweden were eagerly shared. The students had to finalize their project topic so that our Jarfalla hosts could solidify site visits and the like. This was turning out to be more difficult than expected. Students were having trouble narrowing down their topics, and Swedes were having difficulty finding site visits that corresponded to student interests.

Our third class session focused on two topics: international travel and the emotional responses to anticipate when faced with prolonged cultural difference and an introduction to Swedish history, culture, religion and politics. Faculty and staff with expertise in these areas were utilized providing students with a variety of presentations. Of particular interest to the students was the discussion on the emotional impact of culture shock. This discussion with its introduction of a bell curve model of emotional ranges from elation to depression turned out to be a source for unifying the group. Repeatedly throughout the two weeks, students would jokingly referred to themselves or each other as being at the bottom of the curve. It proved to be a good tool for expressing feelings related to cultural difference.

Anxiety over trip details was rising. Concerns about money and getting coursework done in time to leave made for some tense moments outside of the classroom. Monthly communiqués between faculty advisor and students became weekly events. E-mail contact with Jarfalla hosts moved to an almost daily exchange.

Our final pre-trip class session centered on language, the final reflection paper using the Kolb model.[3] format, and group dynamics NPU Swedish language faculty provided the basics of what the language looked and sounded like. As the majority of Swedes have a basic understanding of English, the students felt at ease with this limited exposure. Most of the students had already received instruction on how to write a Kolb model essay, so this part of the class was mainly a refresher. The exercises used for the group dynamics portion were drawn from *Across Cultures*, a Swedish text on cultural diversity, by Oaker-Axelsson and Norman.[4] They mainly focused on ways in which people view time, personal space, and communication. Students were also given the opportunity to address concerns about the trip and travelling in general.

Each student finally chose a specific project to study while in Sweden, which would be the focus of the final reflection paper. Projects included comparing the Swedish police system with the Chicago Police Department, a comparison of how IKEA approached marketing its stores in the U.S. and in Sweden, a comparison of corporate housing in both countries and a comparison of elementary education. One student audited the course and did not choose a topic.

Stockholm, May 8-22, 1999

After an uneventful flight, we arrived in Stockholm early on a Sunday morning. Immediately some of the students began experiencing cultural challenges. Things didn't look as expected. The airport looked just like any other airport. The landscape looked too much like home. So why had we bothered to come so far? Disappointment combined with fatigue was visible on some faces.

Our Järfälla hosts, Kerstin and Don Tuthill spent the day keeping us awake and on our feet with sightseeing throughout Stockholm. The age and beauty of the city started to work its way through tired brains, and by the time we arrived at Drottingham Palace, the current residence of the Swedish royal family, reality was starting to sink in. "You mean this is real? The king really lives here? Look at this place. I only thought this stuff was in story books." The theme for our stay was set. "Was this all really real?"

Kerstin Tuthill and her colleagues at the Komvux had succeeded in setting up site visits to accommodate the students' needs. The students were also required to attend at least two class sessions of their choice at the Komvux. Komvux faculty and students had arranged a number of social activities, including a "Taste of Sweden." Two mandatory group information sharing sessions were scheduled at the end of each week. There was lots of time left free for site seeing and visiting with their exchange counterparts.

Our first school day was filled with introductions and schedule making. Each student had the opportunity to meet with Komvux faculty, many of whom had previously visited North Park, who were explained course schedules and the logistics needed for site visits. Ulf Finnhammer's tour of the Komvux campus provided GOAL students with an interesting architectural contrast to the more formal academic structures they were used to, as well as an introduction to the more relaxed sartorial style of Swedish academics. One student found it difficult to take Ulf Finnhammer's presentation seriously because the Komvux director was not clad in a suit and tie.

After only one trip with Komvux escorts, the students quickly learned how to get around on the public transportation system. With their passes in hand, they bused, trained and ferried off together and alone at all hours of the day and night, leaving their faculty advisor wondering what she had gotten herself into. Students questioned the reality of posted train and bus schedules and were delighted to find that Swedes like to operate on time. Most limited their travel to the immediate metropolitan area, but a couple ventured off far a field, traveling to one of the numerous islands in the Archipelago west of the Baltic Sea and visiting a historic town approximately fifty miles outside of Stockholm. These excursions were undertaken for a host of reasons, including locating a laundromat as well as museum visits.

The students soon learned that punctuality was not only a transportation concern. American time frames that set flexible ranges, e.g. between 6:30 and 7:00, for arrival for dinner were answered with punctuality at 7:00. Swedes were equality prompt when picking up GOAL students, who learned to scramble in order to be ready.

Communication issues became a multi-layered challenge throughout the stay. Keeping tabs on each other was complicated by the fact that our guest house had no incoming telephone service available after 5:00 p.m. There was also only one pay phone available for the guests. Students had access to e-mail via the Komvux, but as the campus was a half hour train ride away, students tended to find other access through hosting Swedes and "net-cafes."

Even face-to-face communication turned out to be challenging. Culturally based misunderstandings of hospitality and personal space lead to a number of interesting events. NPU students were surprised to find out that invitations to Swedish homes were not casual matters that could be left with an "That would be nice" response. The Swedes expected the North Parkers to come to dinner, while the North Parkers thought the invitation was just a suggestion of a possibility that could take place if time permitted. Swedes on the other hand took seriously North Parkers casual comments about needing to buy groceries and promptly delivered their visitors to the nearest grocery store. Once the shopping was completed, the Swedes conducted their charges to the appropriate bus line, loaded them on and waved farewell. The North Parkers were surprised to find their companions standing at the bus stop, waving goodbye, as the bus pulled away from the curb. The North Parkers had thought that everyone was returning to the guesthouse together to drop off the groceries and continue the rest of the day's agenda. The Swedes thought their new friends were wanting to return to the guesthouse to dine – alone. By the end of the two weeks, the NPU students were feeling "hounded" by the Swedes whose sense of hospitality required daily interaction that often lasted until the wee hours of the morning.

Food presented another cultural challenge. Our guesthouse provided a Swedish breakfast of cold cuts, cheese and bread each morning. Coffee, tea, orange juice and milk were also available. Most students quickly found this unacceptable and either passed on breakfast altogether or brought in food more reminiscent of home. Overall they turned to restaurants for the majority of their meals. Restaurants in Stockholm run the gamut from fast food kabob shops to linen and crystal establishments. Students soon discovered that though the variety was similar to the U.S. prices and hours of operation were not. When Stockholmers eat out it is more apt to be for their mid-day meal. In general the evening meal is at home with the family. Thus evening dining options are often limited with kitchens closing early by American standards and/or expensive. Students were also dismayed to find that many of the less expensive options were the same as to be found in the U.S.; e.g., Burger King. By the end of the first week, they had tired of inexpensive kabob shops. By the end of the second week, they had tired of restaurants altogether.

Reflections

There were several surprises. We did not expect that one of our students, a 40 year old woman who had lived all her life in Chicago, would be someone who had never been to O'Hare International Airport and had never flown. The same woman did not bring enough money along to cover basic expenses even though she knew the costs up front and had secured the money. She chose to leave it at home.

We did not expect another student, a professional woman, to use the trip as an occasion to address her fear of flying. She spent weeks before hand engaging in desensitization exercises and felt the trip a success because she handled the airplane well, not because of any particular interaction with the Swedes.

Our students were surprised at the depth of governmental support, covering basic housing, food, clothing and transportation, received by Swedish adult students. This led to more questions about the system of social service delivery in Sweden, noted for its socialistic programs.

Swedish people generally are punctual, wait their turn in "queues," and expect others to do the same.

Most of the adult students we saw were typical Swedes; that is, white, blond and blue-eyed. Yet Swedish faculty have told us that in the past fifteen years, Sweden has received a large number of refugees from other countries. They are dealing with issues of diversity as a relatively new thing.

The one faculty member who traveled with the students found herself to be emotionally exhausted by the demands of the six students.

Generalizations

The identified projects chosen by the students were only a small part of the experience. Much more was transpiring that demanded our attention.

- The 40 year old single mother whose family exerted strong influences to keep her from going, complicated by her unrealistic planning regarding finances, revealed a set of cultural issues that needed to be heard sympathetically.
- The Swedish students expressed some resentment that our students had not spent more time with them when they were in Chicago. One of our group pointed out that all of our students worked long hours while in school, which placed time limits upon them that did not necessarily reflect their lack of interest in the Swedes.

- The lack of access to telephone service at the guest house had to be contrasted with Swedish use of cellular phones. Almost everyone carries a telephone and uses it frequently. No one in our group brought one; we were dependent on pay phones, phone cash cards, or cash. In this time of instant communication, our group expected and demanded daily contact with home.
- By the second week, the desire to return home was very strong for many. One student left early, saying she was in the midst of buying a home and was also the primary care giver of her grandmother. She had not shared this before the trip began, and her departure left the group and leader confused.
- The student who audited the course did not attend the four preparatory sessions, and showed insensitive behavior to his hosts. He remained an outsider to the group throughout the entire trip.
- The perception that Sweden is a western country much like the U.S. was found to be inadequate. While there are similarities, there are also many differences. Reflecting on those findings helped the group understand their own cultural formation, a valuable outcome of the trip.
- The final papers of each student following the Kolb model for a reflection paper based on a concrete experience, spoke to a number of positive learnings for each student in the area of the project chosen for study.

Recommendations

- Rather than asking students to pick a specific topic for reflection, we are leaning toward a more general focus that notices difference in culture, economic and societal realities, ethnicity, and the environment, as well as group dynamics. We found that the papers tended to focus solely on the identified project, and did not address the other reflections, observations, or learnings.
- We wonder about the adequacy of the two week experience. Is it long enough for significant learning to take place? Our students (and leader!) were ready to come home before the end of the two week period. It would have changed the expectations and the learnings significantly to know they were going to stay for an entire year, or semester, or even four weeks. Yet working adult students have great difficulty in spending more than two weeks away from their jobs, so we will focus instead on strengthening the pre and post trip sessions.
- Communication with our hosts was greatly enhanced by the use of e-mail before the visit. Several are continuing to communicate with students and faculty, and we suspect some lifelong friendships have been launched.
- Future international experiences will be staffed by two faculty. This will allow each one to have some "time off" from the responsibility of shepherding the group, and it will allow the faculty to help each other understand what is occurring within the group and better address issues as they arise.

We look forward to hearing of the international study experiences for adults undertaken by other programs, and the opportunity to speak in more depth about issues raised by our paper.

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Barriers to Adult Participation in Undergraduate Education

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This study identifies barriers to participation perceived by adults. It analyzes barriers and the factor structure underlying these barriers, and compares this structure to Cross' (1981) situational, institutional and dispositional categories.

The study found six factors with no extraneous items. The six were bad experience, institutional reasons, lack of resources, course offerings, cost/benefit ratio and childcare. This complex set of findings fits with barriers established in the literature. Bad Experience, a dispositional barrier, and the Institutional factor correspond to Cross' typology. Lack of Resources and Course Offerings are spread among situational, institutional and dispositional factors. Cost/Benefit Ratio is situational and institutional. Childcare is situational.

This study contributes to a complex model of deterrents to participation. A full model could be combined with existing knowledge to form a dynamic model of participation in adult education.

Introduction

Adult education is growing fast. Most of often adults' motivation for learning is career-related (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; Boaz, 1978; Carp, Peterson and Roelfs, 1974; Cross, 1981; Hughes, 1983; Mishler and Moss, 1986). It is now accepted that education during youth does not fully prepare a person for the challenges of adult life. Add in the effects of the baby boom generation, which has caused expansion in each educational level from elementary to postgraduate; people want more education and there are more people wanting it. By 1975, adult learners were the new majority in American higher education (NCES, 1990).

Thus the participants in post-secondary education increasingly are nontraditional students, but adult learners have unequal access to educational opportunities. The difficulties experienced by nontraditional learners are called "barriers to participation." Cross (1981) classified barriers into three categories: situational, institutional and dispositional. Situational barriers arise from one's situation in life. Institutional barriers are practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities: inconvenient schedules or locations, inflexible school fees, inappropriate course offerings, etc. Dispositional barriers are negative attitudes and perceptions about returning to school that limit a student's success (Brookfield, 1986; Charner, 1980; Charner and Fraser, 1986; Cross and McCarthan, 1984; Thiel, 1984).

Colleges need to understand the obstacles to participation perceived by these learners. Most research on participation by adult learners in general (Carp, Peterson and Roelfs, 1974; Johnstone and Rivera, 1965;) has been conducted on larger public institutions (Eversoll, 1986; Sadler, 1982). In addition, such research concentrated on adult learners who were currently enrolled.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the barriers to participation perceived by a sample of potential adult students at a small private tuition-driven undergraduate college. This research could provide a model for other small private schools to address more methodically and effectively planning for meeting the needs of their students. The study will address three research questions:

1. What educational barriers are perceived to exist by potential adult students?
2. What is the underlying structure to the reasons potential adult students fail to attend?
3. To what extent does this structure coincide with Cross' (1981) situational, institutional and dispositional categories of barriers?

Adult Motivation to Participate in Learning

Much of the early participation research was descriptive. Scholars tended to concentrate on demographic variables (e.g., Johnstone and Rivera, 1965). Some summary findings are:

1. Workers and students learn mainly to make career transitions, Homemakers and retirees learn to make family transitions and for leisure (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980).
2. As income rises, adults learn more often for career reasons (Mishler and Moss, 1986).
3. As occupation level rises, adults learn more often for career reasons (Mishler and Moss, 1986).
4. Men learn more often than women because of career changes do, while women learn more often because of family, leisure or health transitions (Cross, 1981).
5. Adults who have attended four-year colleges learn more often for their careers, while adults who have attended high school or junior colleges learn most often for family or leisure activities (Cross, 1981).
6. Adults below the typical retirement age of 65 learn mainly because of career transitions, while senior citizens learn mainly because of leisure and family transitions (Cross, 1981).
7. Adults who are single, married or divorced learn mostly because of their careers, while widowed persons learn mostly because of their family activities and leisure (Aslanian and Bickell, 1980).

Subsequent explanatory research highlighted factors that motivate participation in nontraditional adult education, with the work of Houle (1961) being especially influential. He concluded that participation in adult learning activities was induced by goal-oriented, activity-oriented or learning-oriented types of motivation. In 1970, Burgess (1971) performed factor analysis on adult motivation, finding seven groupings: desire to know, desire to reach a personal goal, desire to reach a social goal, desire to reach a religious goal, desire to escape, desire to take part in activity, and desire to comply with formal requirements.

Boshier's (1971) factor analysis found 14 motivations, which were later reduced to six by Morstain and Smart (1974). These are social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, professional advancement, escape/stimulation, and cognitive interest.

Beder and Valentine (1987) found 10 basic motivations for participation among adult students: self-improvement, family responsibility, diversion, literacy development, community/church involvement, job achievement, launching, economic need, educational advancement, and the urging of others.

As a general theory of motivation, Lewin's (1951) force-field analysis postulates that behavior is a result of competition between driving and restraining forces. Miller (1967) proposed a "push-pull" theory in which positive driving forces "push" an adult toward participation in higher education while negative, restraining factors "pull" the person away. Adult participation depends on the degree of congruence or conflict between the person's needs and the perceived strength of the social and situational factors in the decision.

Catalano (1985) added a third dimension B the noneducational aspects of the person's life B to the decision process. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) and Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) motivators and hygiene factors, Catalano combined the concept of cost/benefit ("barrier/goal") with the notion than an adult's decision to enter college will be ranked in terms of the priority of needs in the person's life. Catalano's model highlights opportunity cost, which includes tuition, books and supplies, income foregone, time spent studying, loss of social activities, and the effort applied to planning and pursuing a degree.

Barriers to Learning

It is important to know why adults do not participate. Barriers to participation generally have been examined through census-type surveys where respondents volunteer reasons for non-participation. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) noted that barriers could be classified as situational, which are external to an individual's control, and dispositional, based on personal attitude.

Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs (1973) analyzed the learning activities of adults already engaged in learning. The barriers in order of importance were: cost, not enough time, not wanting to attend school full-time, home responsibilities, job responsibilities, and the amount of time required to finish the program.

Gallay and Hunter (1979) studied adults who did not return to college. They found that scheduling of classes to fit work responsibilities and lifestyles was a major barrier. Other barriers were tuition fees and related costs, entrance examinations, poor past academic records, red tape, and fear of failure.

Shipp and McKenzie (1981) used factor analysis to reveal seven reasons for non-participation: resistance to change and education, alienation, marginality, social non-affiliation, confusion, program non-relevance, and activity. Shipp and McKenzie described "learners" and "non-learners" according to demographic and psychological factors. Interviewing 232 subjects, the researchers concluded that non-learners were older, held lower prestige jobs, were less educated and had lower incomes than learners. The psychographic profiles of non-learners showed that they were oriented less to the future than to the past or present, had shorter time perspectives, emphasized emotional response more than rational, felt little personal freedom, were less willing to take risks, thought more concretely, depended more on family and friends for advice, and were more action-oriented. On the other hand, learners were considered to be more future-oriented, felt more freedom, were more willing to take risks, thought more abstractly, sought more professional and expert advice, had longer time perspectives, and emphasized rational responses.

Cross (1981) added "institutional barriers" to the mix and classified Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs' barriers as situational, institutional, and dispositional (Appendix A). This categorization is arbitrary, but it is also direct and straightforward. Cross' decision has the widespread support of authors in their referenced to this list and through their use of this categorization of barriers in research (Brookfield, 1986; Brindley, 1988; Charner, 1980; Charner and Frazer, 1986; Cross and McCartan, 1984; Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985; Garland, 1993; Gibson and Graff, 1992; Scanlan, 1984; Thiel, 1984).

Hengstler, Haas, and Iovacchini (1984) found several institutional barriers in their study at a public urban university. Cost was listed a s the greatest barrier. Situational barriers included conflict among job, home, and college expectations. Childcare was considered to be another important barrier. Course availability and course scheduling were important institutional deterrents. Most students in this study preferred late afternoon or evening classes.

Scanlan (1984) reviewed the literature on deterrents to participation, concluding that there were six robust categories of deterrents that emerged in most settings and with most populations: individual, family, home-related problems; cost concerns; questionable worth or relevance of educational opportunities; negative perceptions of the value of education; lack of motivation or indifference to learning; and lack of self-confidence.

Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) factor analyzed the responses of a random sample population using their "Deterrence to Participation Scale" (DPS-G). They found six orthogonal factors: lack of confidence, lack of course relevance, time constraints, low personal priority, cost, and personal problems.

Hayes (1988) factor analyzed reasons for non-participation. Findings from a sample of 160 Adult Basic Education students indicated five basic deterrents to participation: low self-confidence, social disapproval, situational barriers, negative attitude towards classes, a low personal priority. Although Hayes' work contributed to the analytical depth of the non-participation study, the fact that all subjects were participants in ABE programs constitutes a limitation of study.

Martindale and Drake (1989) factor analyzed the Deterrence to Participation Scale (DPS-G) for a specific population of U.S. Air Force enlisted personnel, finding eight barriers: lack of course relevance, lack of confidence, cost, time constraint, lack of convenience, lack of interest, family problems, and lack of encouragement.

Beder (1990) studied Iowa residents eligible for adult basic education who did not participate. He found five factors in non-participation: low perception of need, perceived effort, dislike for school, situational barriers, and an uninterpretable fifth factor. Beder (1991) subsequently concluded that there were two major reasons for non-participation: structural barriers which relate to lack of time, information, transportation and child care; and attitudes toward participation that show non-participants often feel that they do not need literacy or that it is too hard for them, and some simply do not like school.

Domberg and Winters (1993) examined the barriers to adult learning and suggested four categories of barriers: attitudinal, informational, financial, and time scheduling.

Ryder, Bowman, and Newman (1994) studied nontraditional students' perceptions of barriers to persistence at a medium-size Southern University. Financial problems and academic advising were listed as the greatest hindrances to degree completion. Lack of emotional support and the lack of same-age peer group were the least important. Open-ended questions found concerns in six areas: instructor attitudes (teaching and advising attitudes towards nontraditional students); parking availability; advising (quality, knowledge or attitudes of advisors); scheduling (day or night class considerations, number of available sections of each required class); staff (organization); and administrative problems (availability of information).

Methodology

As noted earlier, this study will address three research questions:

1. What educational barriers are perceived to exist by potential adult students?
2. What is the underlying structure to the reasons potential adult students fail to attend?
3. To what extent does this structure coincide with Cross' (1981) situational, institutional and dispositional categories of barriers?

Population and Sampling

The target population is adults over 25 years of age residing n Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, and Sarasota counties in the state of Florida. In this target area, there are 20 small tuition-driven private colleges. The total enrollment of these colleges was about 21,000 in 1993-94. Given the NCES (1993) estimate of adult student enrollment to be about 50% of total enrollments, it is reasonable to estimate the total nontraditional learner population to be about 10,000.

Between September 1993 and December 1994, 1,200 attended informational meetings concerning the degree program and had an individual conference with the admissions staff but did not enroll, or attended one course but dropped out of the program. Stratified sampling was used to select 500 subjects who were representative of the population in terms of factors such as gender and location.

The Instrument

A survey was used for this study. The questionnaire is the familiar 24-item "Learning Interests and experiences of Adult Americans" (Cross, 1981; Appendix A). Respondents used a Likert-type scale to rate their degree of concern for each barrier. The questionnaire has a high degree of psychometric reliability. Powell (1989) found an overall Cronbach's Alpha of .865 and .739 for situational barriers, .778 for institutional barriers, and .716 for dispositional barriers.

Data Collection Procedure

An introductory letter and the questionnaire were sent to the sample of 500 adults. After a 10-day wait for initial responses, a post card reminder was sent to nonrespondents

Then days later, a complete follow-up mailing was sent. After another 10 days, the returned questionnaires were analyzed.

Data Analysis

To explore research question 1, the mean and standard deviation was computed for each barrier (Table 1). To explore research question 2, the 24 nonparticipation items were subjected to factor analysis (principal components with varimax and oblique rotation). Six factors were observed (Table 2). To explore research question 3, these factors were compared to the published literature.

Findings

Reasons for Nonparticipation

Table 1 gives the results for research question 1, listing the mean scores for each item. These generally support earlier research. Three of the first four items are situational (Cross, 1981), while three of the first six are institutional. These items are distributed across four of the six factors subsequently identified.

Factors Underlying Nonparticipation

The complexity of the 24 potential reasons for nonparticipation suggests that factor analysis is a way to clarify the structure underlying the descriptive statistics. The factor analysis is given in Table 2.

The initial factor analysis gave seven factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Following the literature and a screen test, a six-factor solution was chosen. The first factor, Bad Experience, contains items such as "Low grades in the past, not confident of my ability," "Afraid I'm too old to begin," and "Don't meet requirements to begin program," along with "Don't enjoy studying" and "Tired of going to school, tired of classrooms." These items are dispositional (Cross, 1981) and relate to Martindale and Drake's "Lack of Confidence" and "Lack of Interest" (1989). The "Don't enjoy studying" item corresponds to Beder's (1990) "Dislike for School."

Factor 2 corresponds closely to Cross' "Institutional" set of factors. "No transportation," "Too much red tape in getting enrolled," "Hesitate to seem too ambitious," and "Friends and family don't like the idea" are institutional. The fifth element item that loaded on this factor, "No place to study or practice" is situational. The "Friends and Family" item corresponds with Martindale and Drake's "Family Problems" and "Lack of Encouragement." The transportation and red tape items correspond with Martindale and Drake's (1989) Lack of Convenience.

Factor 3, Lack of Resources, contains "Not enough time," "Job responsibilities," "Home responsibilities," "Not enough energy and stamina," and "Amount of time required to complete the program." The responsibility and energy items formed a factor along with the time items (Martindale and Drake, 1989). These are spread across Cross' situational, institutional and dispositional.

Factor 4, Course Offerings, contains "Courses I want don't seem to be available" and "Courses I want aren't scheduled when I can attend," from which its name is derived, and "No information about places or people offering what I want." These are dispersed across Cross' categories and they correspond with Martindale and Drake's (1989) Lack of Course Relevance and Lack of Convenience.

Factor 5, Cost/Benefit ratio, contains "Strict attendance requirements," "No way to get credit for a degree," and "Don't know what I'd like to learn or what it would lead to," all situational, and "Don't want to go to school full time," an institutional factor according to Cross (1981). This corresponds with Martindale and Drake's "Cost" factor (1989).

Factor 6, Child Care, contains "No childcare" and "Cost, including books, learning materials, childcare, transportation, as well as tuition." The second is a catchall item. These are situational factors. Childcare has not emerged as a separate factor in other studies.

The six factors explain a total of 58% of the variance, accounting for 26%, 8%, 6%, 5%, and 5%. Table 2 shows that mean item scores are 1.64, 1.35, 2.95, 2.19, 1.88, and 2.48, suggesting that Lack of Resources is perceived as the most important barrier.

In conclusion, the 24 questionnaire items formed six factors with no extraneous items. The factors were consistent with the literature.

Discussion

Adults choose not to participate in higher education for complex reasons. The reasons are: bad experience, institutional reasons, lack of resources, course offerings, cost/benefit ratio, and childcare. These findings are not surprising; they fit with reasons well established in the literature.

Bad experience, a dispositional barrier, and the institutional factor correspond to Cross' (1981) typology. Lack of resources and course offerings are spread across Cross' situational, institutional and dispositional factors. Cost/Benefit Ratio is situational and institutional according to Cross (1981). Childcare is situational.

Scholars are fleshing out the complicated model of deterrents to participation. A full model could be useful in learning why some participate in higher education and others do not. Such understanding can be combined with existing research into a dynamic model of participation in adult education. This knowledge is also a useful input to marketing educational programs to adults.

Implications for Further Research

Factor analysis, the most important research method used in this study, has proven to relate closely to the population analyzed (Beder, 1990). Although the results of this study are consistent with other published research, a useful follow-up might be to study representative national sample of nonparticipants.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

The following are some problems reported by other adults, which might make participation in formal college study difficult. Please indicate the degree of concern that these are for you. Circle the appropriate level of concern as it applies to you.

1 = not a concern
2 = a minor concern
3 = somewhat of a concern
4 = a considerable concern
5 = a major concern
6 = an overwhelming concern

1. Cost, including books, learning materials, child care, transportation, as well as tuition	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Not enough time	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Amount of time required to complete the program	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. No way to get credit for a degree	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Strict attendance requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Don't know what I'd like to learn or what it would lead to	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. No place to study or practice	1	2	3	4	6	
8. No child care	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Courses I want aren't scheduled when I can attend	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Don't want to go to school full-time	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. No information about places or people offering what I want	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. No transportation	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Too much red tape in getting enrolled	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Hesitate to seem too ambitious	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Friends or family don't like the idea	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Home responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6

17. Job responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Not enough energy and stamina	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Afraid that I'm too old to begin	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Low grades in the past, not confident of my ability	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Don't meet requirements to begin program	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Courses I want don't seem to be available	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Don't enjoy studying	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Tired of going to school, tired of classrooms	1	2	3	4	5	6

For use in interpreting your responses, answers to the following questions are necessary.

1. Indicate your gender. ____ Female ____ Male
2. Your age. _____
3. Your race.
   ____ White/Non-Hispanic ____ African American
   ____ Asian Pacific Islander ____ Hispanic
   ____ Native American
4. What is your marital status?
   ____ Single ____ Married ____ Widowed
   ____ Divorced ____ Separated
5. How many dependent children, 17 years or younger, do you have living with you?
   ____ 0 ____ 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 or more
6. Approximately what was the combined income of you and your spouse (if married) last year (before taxes)?
   ____ under $10,000
   ____ $10,000 to $14,999
   ____ $15,000 to $19,999
   ____ $20,000 to $24,999
   ____ $25,000 to $34,999
   ____ $35,000 to $49,999
   ____ $50,000 and over
7. How many hours per week do you work at a paid job or jobs? ____
8. How has your employment status (hourly vs. salaried) influenced your decision not to attend school?
   ____
   ____
   ____
   ____
9. What was the most important reason that deterred you from returning to school?
   ____
   ____
   ____
   ____
10. If you have continued your education at a different institution, what was the most important reason for choosing it?
   ____
   ____
   ____
   ____

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Barriers to Participation

Item	*Mean*	*SD*
Cost of books, learning material, child care, transportation, and tuition	3.4	1.18
Not enough time	3.4	1.03
Job responsibilities	3.0	1.17
Amount of time required to complete the program	2.9	1.08
Courses not scheduled when I can attend	2.7	1.13
Home responsibilities	2.7	1.26
Not enough energy or stamina	2.5	1.09
Courses I want seem to be unavailable	2.1	1.18
Don't want to go to school full-time	2.1	1.30
No way to get college credit for a degree	2.0	1.05
Strict attendance requirements	1.9	0.95
Don't enjoy studying	1.9	0.99
Tired of going to school and classrooms	1.8	0.95
No information on places or people offering courses I want	1.7	0.96
Low grades in the past, not confident in my ability	1.7	1.07
Have no educational goals or direction	1.6	0.87
No place to study or practice	1.5	0.84
No child care	1.5	1.02
Afraid I'm too old to begin	1.4	0.80
Don't meet requirements to begin the program	1.3	0.68
Too much red tape in getting enrolled	1.3	0.67
Hesitate to seem too ambitious	1.3	0.68
Friends or family don't like the idea	1.3	0.80
No transportation	1.2	0.59

Table 2

Factor Structure for Barriers to Participation

Load	*Mean*	*Item*
Factor 1		*Bad Experience (Mean item score = 1. 6)*
.72	1.7	Low grades, not confident of my ability
.70	1.9	Don't enjoy studying
.67	1.4	Afraid I'm too old to begin
.64	1.8	Tired of going to school and classrooms
.60	1.3	Don't meet requirements to begin program
Factor 2		*Institutional (Mean item score = 1.4)*
.74	1.2	No transportation
.60	1.3	Friends or family doesn't like the idea
.58	1.3	Too much red tape in getting enrolled
.50	1.5	No place to study or practice
.48	1.3	Hesitate to seem too ambitious
Factor 3		*Lack of Resources (Mean item score = 3. 0)*
.78	3.4	Not enough time
.76	3.3	Job responsibilities
.70	2.7	Home responsibilities
.53	2.5	Not enough energy or stamina
.53	2.9	Amount of time required to complete program
Factor 4		*Course Offerings (Mean item score = 2.2)*
.76	2.1	Courses I want seem to be unavailable
.71	2.7	Courses not scheduled when I can attend
.52	1.7	No information about places or people offering what I want
Factor 5		*Cost/Benefit Ratio (Mean item score = 1. 9)*
.71	1.9	Strict attendance requirements
.64	2.0	No way to get credit for degree
.41	2.1	Don't want to go to school full-time
.37	1.6	Have no educational goals or direction
Factor 6		*Child Care (Mean item score = 2.5)*
.72	1.5	No child care
.55	3.4	Cost of books, learning materials, child care, transportation, and tuition

The Instantaneous and the Wait: Disenchantment and Wonder in Education

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In 1918, as the Great Powers devastated the world for the first time this century, Max Weber – perhaps the most distinguished professor of that time – announced the futility of scholarship. Augustly standing before his colleagues and students, Weber explained that learning informed by the methods of the natural and social sciences, the epitome of reason, had "indisputably" failed. It necessarily "disenchants the world" and it "can give no answer to the only important question: 'what shall we do and how shall we live.'" Why?

Our question is especially important now, at the end of the 20th century, when we confront an even more stunning spectacle than Weber did: We live in a world excited by technological gratifications and helplessly addicted to barbarism. The information age, a truly ultimate fulfillment of rationality, offers sure and instantaneous resources to every teacher and any student. But we still do not know how to live. Why?

Information technologies free us from the constraints of time, place, access, status, and identity. And all in an instant. We need not wait for the information we want. We do not need to pause to consider. Nothing and no one need be unexpected. And whatever does not suit our purposes can be transformed into being what we want, or else removed. Yet these devices of control, products of extraordinarily sophisticated reason, can easily enhance the destructive disenchantment which Weber described. Perhaps then, it is actually more reasonable to surrender some of this commitment to knowledge-as-power, to re-introduce into the most advanced practices of teaching and learning, the virtue of waiting.

In all human relationships there is waiting. There is something to do, something to understand, something to feel, but there is always a distance between beginning and fulfillment. Waiting is the experience of the distance. Every relationship, every kind of connectedness, brings its own waiting. Parenting, friendship, therapy, politics or teaching, – to each there is a nature and a hope which determine the quality of the waiting appropriate to it.

We can think about the relationships in our lives so that waiting is a central term of understanding. Parents wait for their children to grow. Friends wait for companionship. Therapists wait for their patients to change and to achieve insight. Politicians wait for their fellow citizens to speak. Teachers wait for their students to learn. Noticing this waiting makes us aware that we are always embedded with others. Perhaps if we savor the waiting which each of those relationships asks of us, we sustain and nurture the relationships themselves.

Imagine eliminating waiting from our relationships. The child would merely be a reproduction of the parents' wishes. The friend would only satisfy the companion's desires. The patient would wholly conform to the therapist's diagnosis. The citizen would simply obey. And the student would copy the teacher. In each case, removing the waiting destroys the relationship.

Preserving the waiting in each of these relationships sustains their inherent value. Common to them all is a space for the reciprocal activity of persons who properly wait for one another to respond. We try to keep our distance, not in order to be separate: our silence is in fact the respect we show for the autonomy of the others involved in these special interactions. Parenting should encourage the ability of the child to be increasingly independent. Friendship flourishes in the trust and enjoyment the companion's experience in each others individual lives. Therapy succeeds when the patient can depend on his or her own judgment. A polity thrives when citizens freely and sociably govern their common affairs. Teaching should support the curiosity and active learning of each student. These activities are collaborations, and their value is never merely instrumental. We participate in them because they satisfy a basic human need – to become ourselves with others. We cherish them for their own sake. But to engage in them genuinely means to surrender what we think we know. It means holding in anticipation; it means to wait. Although we always wait for an end state – responsible children, utterly congenial friends, healthy and happy persons, engaged but autonomous citizens, learned and independent thinkers – we must first wait for the other. This is what makes possible the satisfaction of creating something new together, of enjoying the activity as a relationship even before the end is achieved.

Between the call and the response lie many opportunities. That space is filled by particular expectations which shape the relationship. For example, the teacher asks a question, is certain of the correct answer and expects the student to provide it. In turn, the student, assuming the teacher's right to pose such questions and expecting the teacher to possess the correct answers, tries to offer an acceptable response. Here, the expectations (those of the teacher and those of the student) create a perfect fit. This is a seamless teacher-student relationship. The waiting is featureless; it is only qualified by the amount of time, whether short or long, it takes for the student to respond correctly or incorrectly. But a different set of expectations is possible. The teacher asks a question, has the correct answer, but affects not to know it. The teacher expects more to learn what the student really thinks and less to receive the correct or incorrect answer. In turn, the student, still assuming the teacher should be looking for the correct answer, anxiously tries to offer it. Here, the fit of expectations is imperfect. The waiting becomes much more interesting. The teacher must pause to consider whether to relieve the student's anxiety by judging the answer or to encourage the student to think out loud. The teacher listening and the student thinking fill the space of waiting between them. In a final variant of expectations, the teacher asks a question, doesn't know the answer, and expects the student to join the inquiry. In turn, the student understands the teacher's attitude and becomes an intellectual collaborator. Here, while the expectations fit perfectly, the waiting is the answer. That is, the active reciprocity between teacher and student is an end-in-itself. In contrast to the first instance, where both teacher and student seek to complete their responsibilities in the correspondence of their answers, in this last variation, their responsibility to the collaborative relationship means not achieving closure but creating new openings. The expectation appropriate to this waiting space is not that it be filled with final answers but with ever more questions, with wonder.

A world in which waiting is savored is less certain, but more enchanting. A world in which waiting is derided in favor of productivity and is cut by technology is certain but thin. A world of parents, friends, therapists, politicians, managers and teachers who will not wait is a world filled with the struggle for power.

Expectations about knowledge are immanent in every human relationship. How the parties wait for one another, or fail to do so, promotes or inhibits understanding among them. For example, a friend patiently waits to hear the companion's desire. How warmly is this patience expressed? How genuinely is it meant? The particular qualities of the patience are influenced by the friend's belief about the companion's desire. I have a belief about the compatibility of my friend's desire with my own. I have a belief about how truthfully my friend will express this desire. I also have a belief about how reliably my friend will act upon this desire. At the same time, my friend is making similar suppositions about my receptivity. All of these beliefs are knowledge claims. Moreover, because the relationship is reciprocal, we are assuming that each of us approximately knows the other's beliefs. Or, if my knowledge claims about my friend prove to be inaccurate, I expect that my friend I will duly correct them and we both expect that I will greet the the correction with good will. The interplay of all these knowledge claims expresses and influences the strength of the friendship. Such a dynamic also determines the relative comfort in which each is willing to wait for the other. In a relatively troubled or insecure friendship, I am uncomfortably impatient to receive my friend's response, because I anxiously want or "need" to know that it will be what I want to hear. In a comfortable friendship, I am also impatient to know what my friend's response will be. But, I am more eager to know what my friend really thinks than I am anxious that my friend's response be my own. So, even though I am impatient to learn what my friend will say, I willingly wait, knowing full well that I am ignorant of my friend's response until I actually hear it. In this waiting, I acknowledge and accept my ignorance (albeit not without tension) because I have faith that through our friendship I can learn something from my friend which I had not known myself. Indeed, the friendship itself is a complicated and active repository of understandings – our knowledge claims – about the beliefs we share, including the belief that our knowledge of one another is always unfinished and that this incompleteness is good.

Thus, even in not mainly educative relationships, like friendship or collegiality, there is an enjoyable and valuable waiting which has very much to do with knowing, not knowing and learning. In fact, there are not only knowledge claims in every kind of relationship but also an educative dimension. This grows out of the participants' mutually recognizing that each lacks knowledge that is important to the relationship and which the other or others may have. I wait to learn what my friend thinks not merely because my friend could have something useful to say but especially because I want to know the thinking of my friend. I wait to learn my teacher's, my therapist's, my fellow citizens' and my parents' responses because each can offer me something to learn appropriate and essential to the kind of relationship we are in. From the teacher, I wait for ideas and information; from the therapist, I wait for insight; from fellow citizens, I wait for opinions; and from my parents, expressions of love. Indeed, this waiting for the genuine responses – which I can not know by myself – particular to these people, is the mark of respect for the very kind of relationship I am in with each of them.

To be sure, none of these roles is ever, in the reality of experience, pure. Just as there is a great range of possible assumptions in any relationship, so no actual relationship is unmixed with other types. My friend might be an expert in a subject of importance to me; I might thus want that friend also to be my teacher. My teacher and I are fellow citizens. This complicates the deference I would ordinarily show and which the teacher might take for granted. In the student-teacher role, I am expected to defer to the "teacher's" opinions on certain matters. But in our role as fellow citizens, we should expect an equality of mutual deference, although this might be difficult to achieve given our simultaneous relationship as student and teacher. Perhaps parent-child relationships are the most complicated. For the young child especially, the parent as nurturer embodies and models teaching, friendliness, healing and even the skills and affinities of extra-familial associations. As the child grows older, the parent and child continue to rely on their primarily nurturing relationship, which includes an inequality of authority. However, the child now seeks independence and thus expects to be treated by the parent more like an equal, that is, like a friend. Corresponding to the tension between the child's expectations of receiving both nurturing and freedom, the parent experiences tension between the responsibility of continuing to nurture and the desire that the child will indeed become ever more capable of achieving this freedom. In these moments, lies an exquisite tension of waiting. The parent, like the therapist, waits for signs that the child has achieved insight sufficient for responsible independence. But at the same time, unlike the therapist, the parent remains ultimately responsible for the welfare of the child. Moreover, the child is waiting for the unconditional support of the parent both for caretaking and for permission to be free. This astonishing complexity arises in good part because of the incomplete or incompletely certain knowledge claims which both the parent and the child have about one another. This incompleteness, though a source of confusion, pain and failure, is ineradicable. Thus the waiting, which comes when both parties accept the incompleteness of their knowledge, is fundamentally, if the relationship is to continue, a struggle to learn.

All of these examples illustrate, we believe, that the struggle to learn, the incompleteness of knowledge, elaborately inheres in any human relationship. This struggle asks that every relationship have an educative dimension. It calls us to recognize that in fulfilling the very nature of any type of connection with others (however mixed, as we've described, these types are in reality), we are only manifesting the fact that to be human is both to be inextricably in relationship with others and to learn. Aristotle said that human beings are by nature both political and curious. These conditions of being, which draw us out of ourselves towards others and towards knowing, are necessarily linked. Because each of those other persons with whom I am connected is not myself, my desire to know about what and whom is around me can not completed by myself; I am dependent on those others to satisfy my desire to know. And in this incompleteness, I must wait.

To learn is to wait. We propose to explore the validity and meaning of this assertion in formal educational relationships. Moreover, given the ubiquity of the educative, if we can understand the connections between waiting and formal learning, we might understand the richness of waiting to learn in any relationship.

Our educational scope focuses on college education, even more specifically on working with adult students. In the types of academic relationships we shall be discussing, all the other types of relationships we've introduced are present. To be sure, these adults are our students and we their teachers. Nonetheless, the learning is charged (though not determined) by elements of parenting, friendship, therapy, and politics. Students and teachers are always embedded in overlapping worlds of relationship, which at one moment or another accent or mute these different elements. In the traditional academic model, these dimensions tend to be suppressed. The "academic" is supposed to be abstracted from the "real world." But in a contrasting model, which we call mentoring, students and teachers collaborate. They allow the presence of parenting, politics and all the rest to enhance the learning. In fact, the mentor deliberately waits for those other affinities to come into play. As mentor and student let themselves feel those active affinities at work, the learning becomes less a transmission of knowledge from one to the other and much more a shared work of discovery.

We offer two examples

Liz wants to be an art therapist. When I began to work with her, I was trying to help her explore the academic preparations necessary for entering that field. Her investigation took the form of a formal research project, in which she would interview practitioners and become familiar with some of the relevant professional journals. Though I did not doubt the sincerity of Liz's interest, she often seemed to me to offer bravado instead of diligence. And, instead of focused and clear accounts of her learning, she often seemed to present ideas and information in a scattered and incoherent way. For her part, she reacted to my criticisms by doubting whether I was really on her side; she was not convinced that I really wanted to help her succeed in her studies.

The the distrust between grew to be very serious. For example, she prepared a set of written summaries of journal articles on art therapy, which I thought rather careless and unclear. Both in her writing and in discussion, she seemed to be missing the main points of some of the articles, and to be misunderstanding some of the central terms which she used. Though I tried to express my criticisms mildly, Liz, I'm sure, detected the strong reservations behind them. She bitterly reflected aloud, "I sometimes think you are my enemy." As much as she must have worried about my attitude towards her, I was now skittish about her distrust of me. I was hesitant and frustrated about responding in any honest way to her work; I feared that she would take any criticism or even suggestion from me as a personal attack. Liz and I were now dealing with two different problems: both the quality of her academic work and the quality of our relationship.

Each problem was exacerbating the other. Liz did not believe that I would support her academic work, and I did not believe that, so long as she distrusted me, I could help her improve the quality of that work. I trusted my own judgments about her understanding of the material and weak efforts to engage it, and I knew that I was well within my "professorial authority" to deliver those judgments. However, I knew that I was not helping her be a better student. My image of a "good mentor" was telling me that I needed to allow her some distance from my criticisms and to allow me some distance from her distrust. Whatever the accuracy of my judgments about her work, I needed to create a space, a waiting space, in which she could learn in safety from those judgments, without me.

Liz and I agreed to take a break from one another. Literally, we agreed to place some time between the academic project we'd begun together and our next one. I arranged for her to work with other teachers on other topics. During this separation, we kept in touch and she experienced some academic successes, which I wholeheartedly praised. Not only did her work improve, but also so did our attitudes towards one another. When Liz and I resumed direct academic work together, it was obvious to both us that her work was better, that she could accept my criticisms as constructive, and that I could offer them more constructively. Interestingly, this period of separation had not been empty or passive between us. Not only had we both explicitly agreed to wait for a while before working together again as teacher and student, during the waiting time, we were, in a different way, involved with one another. When she would check in with me, I could tell that she was improving the clarity and precision of her learning, and I believe that she could tell that I was pleased by this.

Liz has not become the perfect scholar; her bravado and the discomfort underlying it remain. Nonetheless, we are now working together with far more trust and productivity than before. The deliberate and active waiting each of us had done enabled us to revise our relationship in a good way, and enabled her to demonstrate her abilities more fully. In the waiting, we learned how to expect the better of one another.

In my first meeting with Michael, he told me about his experiences with inmates and with those in post-prison community residences. He knew that he wanted to continue to work with these people and also knew that there were things about their lives which he did not yet understand. He thought there could be what he called "historical" and "sociological" writings which might help him — which is why he had come to me. But, he also was quick to let me know that he was "interested in the development of the spirit." More specifically, he explained to me in great detail that he believed that those who had experienced the "shock" and deprivation of imprisonment might have access to a kind of elemental dignity and forgiving understanding which could become an antidote to "the insanity of our world." Michael quite eloquently described his conviction: if all of us could listen more carefully to "the voices" of those who "live on the edge," we might be able to "heal" ourselves and change the world.

I very much wanted to follow Michael's lead; I also knew that while he did want guidance from me, he was not especially interested in the analytical framework which I could offer, nor the kinds of readings and writings I would assign. While I believed that what lacking in Michael's understanding was a fuller historical and conceptual perspective, he worried aloud that such an approach would interfere with his efforts to hear those "voices" in their authenticity. I wondered to myself if there were a way we could do both things. By our second meeting, we agreed upon a method of working together: He would suggest readings to me and I to him. His list focused on accounts of "prisons as places of potential self-transformation." Mine focused on prisons as "total institutions" which reflected a society's efforts to "discipline and punish." Over the next months, we reported to one another, and both of us tried to find a common ground – a mutually respectful way of speaking.

No doubt, we had many rich discussions about the prison system and about the experiences of those inside. I learned a great deal from the reading and from listening to him. But, I was sometimes frustrated. While I knew Michael was looking at ideas which were new him and which did not easily fall within his worldview, he always stayed with his point of view. However, I also came to see that more important than the differences in perspective we were offering each other was the fact we were engaged in a serious dialogue. Remarkably, the real sharing in this dialogue was not exactly about the agreed upon topic of the learning contract. The true subject of this dialogue was not ever quite explicit; it was not that we were achieving a confluence of perspectives about the most useful ways to understand prisons and prisoners. Rather, I began to sense that Michael was more comfortable with scholarly analysis than he had led me to believe. What he really wanted of me was that I would serve as a kind of analytical voice that would agreeably accompany his efforts to work through his own thinking and to get closer to those inmate experiences he so earnestly wanted to understand. In effect, I served as an analytical interlocutor who did not dismiss the authenticity the non-analytical approaches to understanding, to which Michael was so committed.

Whether this had been my intention or not, I gradually realized I was not trying to change Michael, not trying to reform him. His experience of my acceptance, more than anything else, constituted the real learning he achieved. He discovered, I believe, that "school," as he had experienced it, did not have to be a merely controlling institution. I understood that I was not waiting for Michael to become more like me. But nonetheless, I was waiting, sometimes anxiously, to see if and how he would engage the analytical readings I'd recommended, and if and how I would engage the more autobiographically spiritual texts he wanted to read. The "waiting" was not, as in Liz's case, an interval between intense academic discussions. Rather, it was a quality of time within those discussions, when we moved back and forth between our different ways of thinking, each waiting to see what the other would come up with. I worried how to describe and evaluate what he was learning; I knew that Michael also worried that I would cut off our exchange. Each of us waited to see what the other would do. I believe, however, that for each of us there was more trust than challenge in this waiting. Indeed, I think that both of us drew comfort from it, a comfort which allowed us some freedom from our different worries about one another. My sense of the demands of the mentoring situation helped me foresee and work with this roughly reciprocal relationship. The waiting which mentoring requires enabled Michael and me to persist, despite our different intellectual manners, in learning together.

It is in the waiting that the "mentor" seeks to create a culture. In this culture it is not only permitted but also desirable for Liz to take some time away from a teacher who presses her too hard and with whom she is unable, for now, to develop her strengths as a student rather than display her weaknesses. And it is good that Michael and his teacher take the time to listen to one another and to reflect together on the material and point of view Michael brings to the study. In the streams of dialogue between mentor and student, the "teacher" improvises periods and kinds of waiting. In Liz's case, the mentor, quite consciously and deliberately consulting an image of good practice, suggests to Liz a literal break in time. In Michael's case, the mentor choose to take the time within their discussions to attend to the authority of student's motivations and ideas. Although the actual practice of these "waitings" is improvisational, because one necessarily can not say in advance what will engage any individual student, in fact the waiting itself depends upon a culture. In this culture, images of collaboration, of waiting to learn what the students really think and what their purposes really are, have tremendous weight. Those images push us away from the lectern and towards the companionship of dialogue.

But the culture of the mentor is not entirely collaborative. The mentor has authority over the student. Even when dialogue emerges, it is at the behest of the mentor, who sets the stage upon which that more equal association can develop. Indeed, as an official of the academic institution from which the student hopes to emerge with a degree, the mentor is responsible for legitimating and directing as well as participating in learning. This authority is based on the mentor's practiced knowledge of inquiry itself and of what creditable learning is generally understood to be. For example, even if Liz had proposed the idea that we should take a break from one another and she should work more closely with another teacher, that proposal simply would not have been carried unless the mentor had approved it. Further, if the mentor had insisted that Liz continue with him, she would have had almost no academic alternative but to have done so. Similarly, even with Michael's obviously well-informed commitment to a particular approach to learning, if the mentor had not accepted its legitimacy, Michael would have been left with the teacher's reading list. Thus, the learning meaningful to him would have had to occur outside the official course. To be sure, the mentor, as authority, waits. Yet, this waiting is not simply a waiting to see what the student will do, but rather a waiting to decide what is best to do for the student.

Just as the mentor student relationship is not entirely collaborative, neither is it completely companionable. Mentors might be friendly with their students; and since both participate in public educative endeavor, mentors and students also cultivate a kind of civic equality. However, mentor and student are not entirely friends, nor are they entirely equal citizens of the academic community. The relationship is more like that between parent and child, or therapist and patient. That is, it is more the responsibility of one party to nurture the other. Students look to the mentor to care for them, as children do parents and patients therapists. Liz and Michael certainly want their mentors to like them, to respect their desires, and to help them. They enjoy the care they receive. But desire doesn't merely reach from student to mentor. The mentors want to care for their students. They are fascinated by searching for an intellectual engagement particular to each these students: and the mentors are proud to fashion those connections. Clearly, in these individual relationships, the parties exchange gratifications, but what is offered and received from each side is not identical. Again, mentors wait. They must take time to feel for the currents which comfort and stimulate this asymmetrical companionship.

In fact, mentors struggle, with a very complicated situation. They are trying to embrace the tensions between equality and authority. Mentors have institutional and vocational responsibilities to speak to students for accepted traditions of knowledge and for the discipline of scholarly inquiry. Whatever the lure of companionable and collaborative conversation, mentors participate in the world as it is, and as the academic representatives of its intellectual heritage. Students want access to that part of the world and to the privileges it offers. However, at the same time, mentors self-consciously play with deploying their authority so that the distinctive abilities and interests of their students can find a welcoming place within the scholarly discourse. In this tense and elaborately layered association, mentors try not to pull rank. Instead, they try to make the claims of expertise into explicit or transparent topics of inquiry between themselves and their students. Both Liz and Michael wanted their own ideas and ways of learning to be taken seriously; they were resistant to conventional academic socialization, to losing their own voices. But both "had" to adapt if they were to achieve the recognition and "credit" they desired. In the intimacy of face to face encounters, the mentor, like a friend, empathetically takes on the tension the student experiences. Like a parent, mentors want to use their power to care for, to help, to strengthen their students. Like a therapist, the mentor uses this tension by introducing "the resistance" into the conversation. Thereby, a critical consciousness, shared between mentor and student, begins to form: That which the student is resisting is not denied, but neither are the reasons for the student's resistance. And, just as a leader asks fellow citizens to take a leap of faith in service to a broader vision of community which they might not entirely see, the mentor makes a promise to the student: If the student deliberately accepts the demands of the academic vocation, and both mentor and student keep a critical eye on its limitations, the student will not lose identity. Indeed, we promise that our students' distinctive contributions will be enfranchised.

To acknowledge the complexity of this multi-dimensional relationship between mentor and student is one thing. But, to offer to "enfranchise" the explicit and implicit claims for care and responsibility to which each of those dimensions calls, demands something more. How should priorities be assessed? Where does authority lie? There are the claims of the intellectual tradition, the political economy of credentialing, and of the academic institution. Others claims come from the students: their educational and career goals, their curiosity, their need for instruction, their desires for friendship, nurturing, and guidance (which often connect to a whole group of non-academic obligations and relationships in their daily lives). And then there are the mentors' own interests and desires: their scholarly commitments and projects, their professional reputations, and their more desires to receive intellectual validation and personal respect from their students.

In a traditional academic model, the tensions among these claims can be prioritized and distributed. Institutional issues can be handled by administration; students' personal issues and learning problems can be politely referred to guidance counselors and academic support services; teachers can expect their interests to be spoken for and corroborated by departments and fellow scholars. institutions to give them time for scholarly activities and their students. And, professors can expect that their students attend to academic business. When mentors embrace all of this, they find that these claims do not readily cohere in general but also that their strength and quality will differ from student to student. Liz, for example, did not want to do conventionally acceptable academic reading and writing for very different reasons than Michael. Both introduced idiosyncrasies requiring unconventional academic responses; yet both wanted recognized academic degrees. If mentors and students do not weigh the comparative value of these claims, chaos will follow. That is, no single claim – personal or academic – self-evidently demonstrates more validity than any of the others. Yet, mentors can not say to students, "Whatever you want to do is fine." Nor can students say to mentors, "Whatever you demand is fine." Moreover, both mentor and student understand that institutional policy can never be a sufficient guide to solving these problems. A decision must be made. Therefore, the only course is to embrace the competing claims as an explicit topic of collaborative inquiry. In so doing, mentor and student necessarily pause to consider how the privilege of "the life of the mind" can be integrated into the ordinary life of each individual. Waiting is not merely a useful device. It now becomes a fundamental subject: "How can we shape our time together to decide what is important, to consider what to do and to plan how to do it?"

In A Room of One's Own (1928), Virginia Woolf poses a similar question about the form of writing appropriate to the then current experience and station of women:

"The book has somehow to be adapted to the body, and at a venture one would say that women's books should be shorter, more concentrated, than those of men, and framed so that they do not need long hours of steady and uninterrupted work. For interruptions there will always be. Again, the nerves that feed the brain would seem to differ in men and women, and if you are going to make them work their best and hardest, you must find out what treatment suits them – whether these hours of lectures, for instance, which the monks devised, presumably, hundreds of years ago, suit them – what alternations of work and rest they need, interpreting rest not as doing nothing but as doing something that is different; and what should that difference be? All this should be discussed and discovered; all this is part of the question of women and fiction."

Encouraged by Virginia Woolf's hint, we might ask just how valuable for inquiry hours of monkish lectures might be in comparison to "interruptions" which claim the attention of curious students and teachers. Indeed, these interruptions – perhaps the rhythms and matter of everyday life – might well be the valuable points which stimulate contemplation and to which one must return. After all, isn't an ultimate purpose of learning the enrichment of ordinary experience? "Interruptions" are, for student and mentor, valuable academic material. They can take the time to consider these interruptions – the claims of work, of family, of community, and even personal interests and preferences. This time is a kind of "rest," what we have called "waiting." Mentoring begins when student and teacher take time and care to understand and evaluate the complex situation in which they are involved together, a situation enriched by the lives they live beyond pre-calculated academic syllabus.

By its very nature, an "interruption" can't be predicted nor its meaning calculated. In the manner of an improvisation, we must be ready to be open to it, and to wait to discover its significance as we explore it with our students. Using all the skills and tools of scholarship (careful analysis and reading, critical questioning, in-depth research, rigorous logic etc.), we can find out with Liz just how and why she can work better with other teachers, and with Michael how embracing a variety of discourses on the prison experience can deep both of our understandings. By taking the time to listen to the call of the seemingly idiosyncratic preferences of these students, we accept questions we hadn't anticipated, we expand our own experience and understanding, and we make a collaborative and reciprocal bond with our students in the very activity of looking for the truth of the matters which have presented themselves.

To regard these occasions as both likely and valuable educational moments, to preserve these waitings as everywhere possible and desirable in learning, is, in fact, to make certain assumptions about world. It is to presume that the world is not completely bounded by any theory or any set of pre-plotted practices. It is to presume that the domination of constricting intellectual structures can be loosened when we make time and room to listen to unexpected contingencies. And, it is to presume that it is valuably unsettling to be open to the call and the influences and the allure of as yet unheard songs. In this way, we, as mentors, see the world not so much as material to be calculated, processed and constructed, but rather as a ubiquitous presence which can unfold and disclose the educative in every moment of our experience. Our calling is to hold ourselves in curious anticipation of these surprises, illuminations and wonders. Thus, we try to re-enchant the world.

Distance Education and the Adult Learner

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Overview

The Plattsburgh State University distance education network was developed with a grant received in the Fall of 1993 to develop a distance learning RN-to-BS completion program for nurses in rural areas of northern New York State. The first live, two-way (audio and video) interactive "Telenursing" courses were delivered in the spring semester of 1994. The network consists of nine sites (including Plattsburgh State University) with credit courses currently being delivered to up to five sites simultaneously. A post-graduate Certificate in Advanced Studies in Education Administration is also being delivered to two sites via the distance learning network.

The development of distance learning at Plattsburgh State University has been replete with challenges related to the technology, logistics, faculty support and development, and policies and procedures antithetical to the needs of distance learning students. We are entering our 6th year delivering the RN-to-BS completion program and have had 64 students graduate from the distance sites, most of whom have never set foot on the campus. This achievement reflects an institutional commitment to distance learning and to the adult population we serve.

Implementation of distance learning at the course level

Unlike some telecourses, correspondence, and independent study courses, the Plattsburgh State University Telenursing program involves significant classroom participation, and promoting this interaction is a major challenge for instructors. A course may include as many as five sites as well as students present in the studio classroom, so the instructor needs to make sure that students in all locations have an opportunity to participate fully in all "classroom" activities.

Two strategies are especially useful in promoting interaction. These involve introduction of case studies and debates. Students at each site work as small discussion groups, off camera. They are given time to discuss the case study or to develop a position in a debate. A spokesperson is appointed, and when the class reconvenes on camera, each spokesperson summarizes the discussion at each site. This approach usually generates lively discussion from site to site as other students raise questions or offer comments.

One of the strengths of the Telenursing program is the opportunity for students to learn from each other since the students live and work in different communities and diverse clinical settings. This variety provides for sharing of different perspectives and alternative points of view.

The clinical component of the program provides another direct opportunity for students to become actively involved in the program. Clinical courses include on-camera classroom time and clinical experiences in a variety of clinical settings. Adjunct faculty at each site provide clinical supervision and hold post conferences to help students share and analyze their clinical experiences.

Faculty-student contact is encouraged either directly over the interactive system, via telephone, e-mail, or snail mail. Faculty are cognizant of the need for timely feedback and the need to respond to student questions. Students are encouraged to ask questions during class to facilitate their learning and their comfort with the delivery mode. Library resources are available on-line via computers installed at each delivery site library. Students take a one-credit Library Research course that teaches them how to access the Plattsburgh State

University Feinberg Library databases, how to do research by computer, and E-mail. The College's Online Writing lab (OWL) provides writing assistance to distance learning students by E-mail or fax. The OWL facilitator makes a presentation during the first Telenursing course to make students aware of its availability. Many students have availed themselves of this service and the feedback has been invariably positive.

Exams are administered on-camera and proctored by each site's technical assistant who also monitors the equipment and facilitates the delivery of materials to and from students.

Implementation at the program level

The program level involves delivery of student services and is the primary responsibility of the program coordinator who also handles recruitment, advisement, and day-to-day operations of the Distance Learning Office. In addition, the coordinator provides general information, registration, clarification of regulations, rules, and procedures, offers support and encouragement, and acts as an advocate on behalf of the student. The coordinator works with faculty, administrators, and staff to promote and clarify issues that affect distance learners. Among the common issues addressed are admissions requirements, residency credits, upper-level requirements, transfer credits, General Education requirements, and payment schedules and fees. Successful resolution of these issues have come from developing positive working relationships with administrative offices, including the Bursar, Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, and Academic Advising.

Promoting distance students' involvement in their programs and in the college community is especially challenging in distance education. The majority of the students participating in Plattsburgh State University's distance education programs are adult learners – in fact, the average age of the RN Option (Telenursing) students is 37. The myriad demands on their time and energy, including work and family, as well as physical distance from the home campus contribute to a sense of separateness. Efforts are made, however, to involve distance learners in the life of the campus and include induction into Sigma Theta Tau and Alpha Sigma Lambda, the Nursing and Adult Student Honor Societies, respectively. Graduates are feted at a reception after commencement where families, faculty, and administrators are invited to celebrate with them. A Telenursing newsletter keeps them apprised of upcoming courses, campus activities, academic calendar information, fees and refund schedules, and the site visitation schedule. Workshops have been successfully transmitted on the interactive system related to Stress Management, Resume Writing, and Internet Job Search. These activities help provide access to services otherwise unavailable to distance students. A World Wide Web page for distance learning at Plattsburgh State University is also under development.

A recent survey of Plattsburgh State University distance students found a high level of satisfaction. Over 82% of the respondents were satisfied with their access to faculty and found them sensitive to their other responsibilities as adult workers and family members. They also agreed that faculty take their concerns seriously, respect their opinions, and encourage them to think independently. Students generally felt comfortable in the distance learning classroom and received additional support from their classmates. Eighty percent were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with academic advising, and access to other student services. Plattsburgh State University has made a concerted effort to place the needs of the distance student foremost in any planning for distance education.

Implementation at the institutional level

In June 1997, the President of Plattsburgh State University and the President of the United University Professionals appointed a Joint Labor-Management Subcommittee on distance learning charged with reviewing current distance learning programs, assessing the potential for future expansion and development, and identifying and making recommendations for such activities as they relate to employment policies and procedures.

The result was an agreement that focused on the following areas: academic standards, faculty involvement, university and faculty rights and responsibilities, resources, and organizational structures.

As part of this agreement, a Distance Learning Strategic Planning Committee was formed to continue to explore options, oversee policies, and make recommendations. This committee, composed of a variety of personnel including faculty, administrators, and technical support personnel, continues to meet on a regular basis to conduct research and make recommendations about the direction of distance learning at Plattsburgh State University.

Recent activities of this Committee have focused on the Plattsburgh's participation in the SUNY Learning Network, a statewide network that provides on-line courses developed by SUNY college and universities. After meeting with a representative from the Network, the Committee voted to proceed with plans to participate; two courses will be offered in the fall semester. In addition, a five-part workshop series was held in April and May to acquaint faculty with both the technology and the pedagogy of teaching courses using distance learning technologies. The topics included "Approaches to Teaching Adults," "Issues and Practices," "Effective Media Choices," "Assessment and Support Services," and "Incorporating Active Learning." The workshops were taught by faculty from other SUNY campuses, as well as experienced professors from Plattsburgh. In up-coming months, the Committee will continue its exploration of appropriate courses and degree programs to offer to its constituents.

Having administrators and faculty work together to develop recommendations and continuing this collaborative process through a campus-wide committee has worked well at Plattsburgh State University. These processes laid a groundwork from which to build future programs that will benefit the institution and the region.

Expanding the Concept of "Learner:" A Layered Analysis of the Learning Process and Its Implications for Liberation through Education

Patty McNally and Beth Sonntag

The key to attaining the ultimate goal of liberation is the recognition and understanding of the duality of the roles of teacher and learner. It is this understanding and its utility in the learning environment that creates a community of learners who jointly engage in this liberating learning process. Some adult learners are initially cautious travelers on this learning process journey and others enthusiastically embrace the possibilities: the key to the journey is the recognition that the learner is the teacher and the teacher is the learner; thus, we proceed as a community of learners.

The term "empowerment" has at its root the assumption that one person or group of people hold "the power" ... and as a result of a behavior change or appropriate training to the people without power, they will then be worthy to have bestowed on them a share of the power. How presumptuous! How hegemonic!

As adult educators, we need to lead the paradigm shift to the point where the individual recognizes the power of self; therefore eliminating the need for the facilitator to empower the student. This process begins with recognizing the needs of the adult learner. In order to recognize adult learning needs the following focus areas must be considered:

- Learning process: developmental stages, prior learning experiences
- Curriculum: relevance; direct application, validation of knowledge of adult learner
- Teacher: learner-centered, model exemplary learning and behavior, content field expert.
- Goals: The liberation of both teacher and adult learner from oppressive learning paradigms.

Whether one embraces Erikson's Theory of Identity Development or Loevinger's Theory of Ego Development or Levinson's Theory of Seasons of Adulthood it is clear that as adults we progress through a somewhat predictable or at least a framed pattern for development. Each of these concepts reflect an external circumstance or event and what internal process is generated as a result.

Fiske and Chiriboga indicate that the perceived self often accords with the life stage and circumstances in which people find themselves. Tennant and Pogson write that adult educators inevitably become engaged with adult development because they are in the process of promoting adult learning. They argue that there are three broad areas of development that need to be addressed by adult educators: the development of adult learning capacity; the investment of the "self" in learning; the link between social development and personal development.

The development of self is a lifelong pursuit that struggles to preserve continuity with past experiences and simultaneously, to change and develop to make sense of the present and future. Two domains of theory and research in adult development are presented by Tennant and Pogson:

1. The development of intellectual or cognitive functioning; and,
2. The development of personality and social roles.

They proceed to write that intelligence during adult years can only be fully understood by examining how it is applied in the everyday world. Individual development then is both a social and personal phenomenon.

Tennant and Pogson argue that adult development can only have meaning in a given social and historical context. Their research validates adult learning in the milieu of social and historical perspectives. In addition, the whole premise of this style of education is that the adult connects their practical experience with the theory thereby validating what their life work and learning has been.

The social context, upon reflection, can be analyzed in two ways. Social could mean less community and more corporate culture experience. Certainly, in the classroom when organizational management theories are discussed, the corporate culture of the students is more relevant than the community in which they were reared. As an adult educator, all these factors must be considered when determining the optimum methodology to draw a student into the learning process.

Prior Learning experiences greatly affect how an adult learner comes to he learning environment. Whether those experiences were positive or negative, those memories remain stored in the sub-conscience and can be inadvertently acted upon wen a new learning situation presents itself. We can all conjure up instances in our lives when we as the learner were not valued; perhaps even humiliated by asking a question that was labeled "dumb" or by submitting work at the wrong time. That is the "baggage" an adult educator must get past before learning can begin.

The key to all learning is relevance, but it is critical to adult learners. Whether in a corporate or academic setting, the adult learner must be charged with learning curriculum that will fulfill an intrinsic or extrinsic need. Occasionally, although hopefully not often, the adult educator may have to create that need.

The curriculum must connect new information with knowledge the learner already processes thereby validating the knowledge the adult learner bring to the learning environment and creates new knowledge.

The teacher is the key to facilitating this environment.

Teacher: A/K/A instructor, facilitator, professor, trainer, leader, director, guide, mentor. It goes without saying that this person would be a content expert. However, having said that, the rest of the focus must be on the learner.

Leaner-driven – in simple terms it means, know the audience! How does one know their audience? Ask! "What is it you want to learn? How can we work collaboratively to discover new ways to become more effective?" Collaborative learning requires an openness, readiness and a willingness to learn from both sides; the teachers as well as the learner. Small group discussions, case studies, simulations, student led presentations are all techniques helpful in eliciting the level of participation and direction from the learner to make it relevant to them.

How does the teacher model exemplary behavior? An overriding respect for the student is key . . . and is the first thing an adult student can detect when it isn't there. Secondly, a genuine concern for the student as a learning partner. To demonstrate this concern, a teacher must be willing to adjust and accommodate the expressed and sometimes unexpressed learning needs of the student. Any knowledgeable teacher begins each session with form of frame, outline, or format for the class. But to truly be leaner-driven, the teacher must be ready to adjust the content to address issues or concerns that develop as a result of discussions within the class.

The goal in all learning situations is to ignite a fire within the student. Granted, it isn't always possible to become passionate about all topics. However, it is possible for the teacher to plant a seed that can begin an internal process that will allow the leaner to recognize their self-abilities and self-worth.

The paradigm shift begins as the adult student and adult educator recognize the duality of their roles. This releases the adult educator from thinking (ore presenting the façade) that the know "everything." When they, as well as the students, see themselves as co-learners, barriers can come down and collaboration and co-learning can begin.

By recognizing the student as a co-learner, the teacher is validating the whole person as an equal learner allowing them to begin to see the "power of self."

The teaching-learning environment plays a vital role in the liberation process. We feel the student must be provided a "safe environment" in which prior learning is affirmed and shared as new learning takes place. The psychological climate that Knowles presents as conducive to learning is applicable to the practice of effective adult education in all settings.

1. A climate of mutual respect (the safety issue).
   Knowles indicates people are more open to learning when they feel respected. This refers back to the development of self and the validation of experience the adult brings to the learning setting.
2. A climate of collaborativeness.
   Knowles refers to a sharing relationship. Our preferred environment stresses the value of learning from each student as well as the designated teacher. We support a mastery learning atmosphere in the classroom where a student can resubmit their revised work if they are not satisfied with their initial grade. Thus, the student has more control over their final grade. There should be no rivalry or animosity between the student and facilitator or among the students. This climate of collaborativeness is not limited to an academic environment. There should be a collaborative environment to determine work goals for an annual employee performance appraisal. There should be no surprises when an employee goes in for a performance appraisal. Their work goals should have been developed collaboratively with their team at the start of the year and evaluated quarterly.
3. A climate of mutual trust.
   Knowles writes that people learn more from those they trust. Especially given the power issue with traditional faculty, it is critical for those people facilitating adult learning to structure an atmosphere of trust.
4. A climate of supportiveness.
   People, especially adults who are in a learning situation need to feel supported, not judged or threatened. In our practice, the support is valued both from the teacher and the peer students.
5. A climate of openness and authenticity.
   The teacher must develop an atmosphere of openness by sharing part of themselves and their experience with the adult learner. This can encourage the student to critically reflect on their experiences and learning.
6. A climate of pleasure.
   Learning should be fun!
7. A climate of humanness.
   Treating learners with respect, indicating they are valued as human beings and as students takes so little effort on the part of the teacher. These components to the process Knowles presents can be part of an extremely effective method for adult learning. The climate is as essential to learning, if not more so, than the depth of content knowledge of the instructor.

It's critical to construct the learner into a "comfort zone." To do so the facilitator must allow the individual adult learner to identify "what do I want to know" vs. "Tell me what I need to know."

Part of understanding the learner is to recognize and understand the external influences that have an impact on their ability to learn. Both the home environment and the work environment can carry both positive and negative influences on the learners journey. Internal influences are frequently more difficult to recognize and address. Past learning experiences engrave events that affect an individuals self-worth and may impact ability issues. Consider one's motivation to return to formal learning: company downsizing, divorce, promotion needed and how these may cause an individual to question their self worth before they even enter the classroom formerly known to them to be the "center of judgment" where learning is measured as satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

One area of learning that currently demands a "safe" environment for a community of learners (and the community of the learned) more than any other is the area of technology. The prior learning that an adult student brings to this arena ranges from minimal to proficient.

A classroom of adult learners will contain the "technology challenged" individual. There will be the individual who will be able to identify the computer on a desk and admire it from afar. There will be the learner who knows how to turn on the computer and check e-mail and may even know how to use a basic word processing system. And then, there will be the individual who can program in three languages and is a certified professional in the latest and greatest software.

Notably, we are referring to the aspect of computer usage although there are many other avenues of technology use in the classroom. Nevertheless, the underlying issue is the same: recognize the adult learners needs.

When a teacher and/or student utilizes any form of technology for learning, several questions should be addressed: Is it relevant? Is technology utilized for the sake of utilization? Does it contribute to the learning process and the presentation of materials? Does it detract from the value of group development vital to a learning community?

The curriculum must connect new information with the technological knowledge the learner already possesses in order to validate the learner and create a comfort level for new learning. Too much or too little information can cause an interruption of learning. The individual with more technology experience can access information and utilize technology (i.e. web research, chat lines, subject related software) with great speed and little thought. The technology challenged person loses the safe learning environment and the developmental readiness which is needed for learning to occur. The student will spend more time on learning how to use the technology to complete the learning then on the learning objectives for the course.

Does this mean that technology should not be used? No. Technology is providing learning opportunities ranging from video-linked classrooms to "virtual" universities to study groups via the world-wide-web. Adult learning has never been as accessible and diverse! Will group development be eroded? The valuable dynamics of a cohort can be maintained by threading technology with the interaction of an effective learning community.

The teacher must be ready to incorporate the learning of technology with the learning objectives for the course and utilize the learning community to attain this objective. It is important for there to be a support base for this community: money, help lines, mentors, study groups and time must be invested for technology to be effective.

Technology should be used to aid in the liberation of the learner/teacher, not as a restrictive binding. It should not lessen the learners journey of questioning, seeking meaning, problem solving , critical thinking and reflection. Rather, technology should affirm the desired learning objectives and the community of learners.

In summary, a community of learners facilitates an environment that allows the individual to recognize the power of self thereby challenging the perceived role of teacher as a source of power. By recognizing the individuals learning needs, providing a safe road for the journey, and intertwining technology and community, the leaner begins their travels with the freedom of unlimited possibilities.

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Strategies for Helping Students Evaluate Online Materials

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Some faculty think that the Internet is a treacherous territory, filled with nonsense, propaganda, and misinformation that our students believe is equal to scholarly work. While this may be true, I think that it is also an opportunity for us to help students develop critical reading skills which they can use for both online and print-based materials. In this workshop, I will share examples from my online course, *Topics in Computers and Society: Information Superhighway*, which illustrate the technological tools that we can use to gain information about online resources, as well as where these new media merely highlight the need to think critically about everything that we read.

Introduction

College librarians agree, in general, on these criteria for evaluating web sites:

- Author
- Publisher
- Currency
- Content

We faculty look at these criteria, nod in agreement, and pass them on to our students. But how do our students receive them? Do they understand what "credentials" and "authority" mean? Do they appreciate the difference in criteria for "currency" in such diverse fields as 18th century English novels and Macroeconomic Policy? Can they compare the content to the body of literature and make an intelligent judgement regarding whether this site is consistent with the literature? Can they look at references and determine whether or not they are one-sided?

Who is the author and does the author have authority?

Faculty judge authority by recognizing the author's name and relating it to other work with which we are familiar, or looking at the author's title and professional affiliation (including department) and recognizing the quality of the institution and the position of the author. If we are not familiar with the author's previous work, we may look at the bibliography to see what sources have been cited, look for other works by the same author, check the educational background of the author, or read reviews of the author's work. To do this effectively, we incorporate additional information. We may know the author personally from graduate school or conferences. We may have been reading the author's work for years. We may know the reputation of that institution in our field. The point is that we have a frame of reference in which many of the names we see already have a place.

How can we help students develop this frame of reference? What will they find if they search for the author on the web? At the library? What skills does it take to evaluate the results? What questions should students ask of an author? What clues can students get from the technology and which must they derive through thinking critically about the results of their searches?

Who is the publisher?

The saying goes, "You can't tell a book by its cover." While that is certainly true, faculty infer a great deal from the cover. We know who the publishers are in our fields and we have a good idea of the review process that the material went through before being published. We may also have an idea from the cover design whether the book is designed to appeal to a mass audience or a specific niche. In any case, we know that the decision was made to invest in the production and distribution of the book and we can tell the difference between a known publisher and a vanity press edition.

Can we infer a similar set of information from a web site? Can we learn from the web site whether it has been reviewed and if so, by whom? If the web site has not been reviewed, what does this mean?

Is it current?

What does "current" mean to faculty? Presumably, it varies depending on the subject being examined. For issues related to the Internet, I measure time in weeks and months – for economic history, my time horizon is much longer.

How can students know what current means to us? How does "currency" vary by field of study? By level of study? Is "currency" more important the higher the level? Or does it depend solely on the subject being studied? How can we use technology to tell us when the site was posted? Modified? Does that matter if we don't know the currency of the data used in the analysis?

What is the content?

This aspect of the web site is generally the most obvious to us as faculty and the least identifiable to our students, at least to those who are new to our subject. When we approach a new piece of information, we have a rich, varied background with which to compare it. We know the literature; that is, we know major ideas in our field, we know the areas of controversy, we know what references should be cited and how to judge the quality of the (print) references, we know the appropriate methodologies and analytical approaches for our field. We can distinguish scholarly work from popularization, and we can filter out ideas that are out of the mainstream. For the latter, we each have our own filters to further decide whether this idea is new and, perhaps, worthy of further study, or whether this is obviously nonsense. Further, we can not only recognize bias, but we can find appropriate counter arguments and alternative perspectives so that we gather a variety of perspectives.

What guidance can we give to students? How can we help them build a similar context? How can they use the technology to fill in some of the gaps? What can the outgoing links (references) from a site tell us? What can we learn from finding out who has linked to this site? (Yes, there is a way to do this!)

Technology is a tool

There are technological tools which will allow us to answer some of the questions above. You and your students can learn to decode the URL (Uniform Resource Locator), find dates of web pages when they are not included, search for credentials of authors, determine who has linked to a web site, find out whether a web page is part of an official site, and so on. Still, all of this material needs to be interpreted, and the skills required to interpret this information are the same skills that students need to use to interpret whatever they read.

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"The Shadow of Doubt Resides Within:" Educational Persistence Among Non-Traditional Graduate Students

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"I see two types of individuals," a student says in describing her colleagues in our non-traditional graduate program. "Those just adding a degree to an already professional career and those who are changing their whole lives. For the second type of student [education] is more than just a degree. It is going on to using new behaviors and skills one never had before. It takes great courage to "change." This is what the program calls some of us to do. "It is a life transformation and the shadow of doubt resides within."

The program being referred to was completed through Vermont College of Norwich University, which has a rich, thirty-year history of offering non-traditional adult education. Our Graduate and CAGS Programs, in particular, provide students with the opportunity to pursue individualized mentored studies in a low residency model. Collaborative learning communities, reflective practice, and inquiry-based investigations are embraced and embedded in this academic framework, encouraging students to examine questions of personal and professional relevance within a supportive and challenging educational environment. Consistent with our student-centered focus, we designed the questions in this research project to gain insight into the student experience, insight that enables institutions, like ours, to better serve the needs of their respective non-traditional adult populations.

What qualities enable students to find the "great courage to change" while continuing their studies? How can non-traditional educators support students as they live "a life of transformation?" "What institutional practices assist adults in conquering the shadow of doubt [that] resides within?" Although less-eloquently articulated, these questions formed the core of our investigation into the factors influencing persistence to graduation in our program.

The findings or our study, which employed questionnaires comprised of open-ended, "descriptive" questions, and semi-structured interviews, perhaps contain few "surprises." Yet its value, we believe, lies in the vivid snapshot of the juggling act that is non-traditional graduate study undertaken in various stages of "adult" life, and the articulate strategies and suggestions which the participants – all successful graduates – offer to incoming students and to the institution. While this paper will focus on salient themes which emerged from the research, our presentation and future writing will center on applications of the findings to the improvement of educational practice.

(1) Students' personal and academic lives are inextricably linked.

In this finding, which is hardly surprising, the spheres of adult development and adult education collide. What is most striking in respondents' stories is the force and unpredictability with which they collide. "Be a whole person for the student – not just intellectually, but emotionally, if needed" begs a graduate. And one understands this plea while reading of personal events which intrude upon graduate studies. "I had a personal loss in my life that took place during the second summer of my graduate program," a woman writes. "It wasn't so much that I felt that I couldn't 'go on' in the program. Frankly, it was that I wondered whether or not I could 'go on' with my life. "The event rocked my entire world and sent me plummeting emotionally into a deeply confused state."

Another confronts a chilling life change, but finds solace in her work.

> "The only time I felt I couldn't go on was when a personal tragedy stopped me in my pursuit. My daughter-in-law was murdered by my son. Months went by staring at my project. I finally wrote about what happened. I placed it within my project. It fit! I wrote about survival. My witnessing the suffering my family went through made me realize we could go on. My completion of the masters work helped me come back to my journey. My work became a memorial to my daughter-in-law, the family I have and the little boy, Jimmy, who was given to us after my daughter-in-law died."

While not every student encountered such difficult transitions, it was the rare individual whose course of study was not influenced by life >crises,' positive or negative.

(2) Successful persistence in graduate study is greatly enhanced by the meaningful participation and support of significant others.

"This may be a program that is 'self-directed,'" one graduate astutely notes. "But if one has a family, it is 'family directed!' Everyone has to pitch in and sacrifice. There are a lot of times that I've had to say 'no' to parties, functions, family, and professional events. My wife and children have spent more time alone since the program. But on some levels it has made a strong relationship stronger."

Flexibility on the part of family members and significant others alleviated some of the strain of the balancing act. "There were times when my role as a grad student conflicted with my role as 'wife' or 'spouse,' says one fortunate student, 'but it did not cause a problem because what we didn't expect, my husband was flexible with."

Recognizing the role of her children in her success, one woman adopts a symbolic strategy: "The 2 years I spent as a grad student were short for me, but long for them. I tried very hard to show them we were getting closer to the end whenever I could. We counted down the last 100 days – cutting a piece off of a tape measure every day with great gusto."

Even in their very presence, children served as "encouragers" of persistence, embodying, in the case of many respondents, their mothers dreams of a better life.

"I think my personal determination to advance myself and do better for my children was the single most important factor [in persistence]," a woman explains. "I am a divorced woman and had a really hard time. I did not want my children to be on welfare and be ashamed of their home and me."

(3) Gender, child-rearing, status, and financial status most significantly influenced students' experience of their education.

Most at risk for stress, among the informants were women with children living at home, particularly if they were sole breadwinners. The juggling act required to meet the demands of competing roles rarely left female students feeling good about themselves:

"I pretty much ignored the needs of my family during the program," one woman wrote. "I came home from work and went straight to the computer. I felt horrible ignoring my daughter. My husband took on more of a 'mothering' role at this time. I felt so *selfish*."

Essentially all of the women with children at home answered with some variation of "constantly," when asked "was there ever a time in which *your role as a graduate student* conflicted with one or more of *your other life roles?*" "I hate to say it," one admits, "but I believe it conflicted the entire time!"

Women were well aware of the perils of the balancing act:

> "Time management was my biggest challenge – also concern that my sons wouldn't get enough parenting. As a single working parent I'd had plenty of practice, but adding graduate work was an added strain. My sons were 11 and 15 when I started the program. I tried very hard to let them know what I was doing in terms of school work, to include them (reading papers aloud to me for editing, copying things at the library with me, etc.), and to celebrate every milestone (completing a paper, or reading area) with them. I knew that the one thing that could interrupt my progress was problems with my kids and that I was asking a lot of them by stretching my self so thin."

For women who could afford to, cutting back on the number of hours they worked, hiring an occasional house cleaner, or serving one more takeout pizza for dinner relieved role overload to some degree. But for the financially-strained, *role* strain was exacerbated.

> "My life role as a *friend to others* and a family member was in conflict a few times when I just had to say 'No'! Mostly it wasn't the *work;* it was the lack of funds. (There were times when I didn't have gas money!) My car also broke down and that sort of thing. And, because my 'research' required school, camp and program *VISITS*, I really couldn't work full-time to actually be able to *afford* such things as gas money, food etc. I was alone in this. So, in summary, I think my role as sole breadwinner independent woman was compromised."

Even single women felt the relational tug as they attempted to devote themselves to their studies. A sense of *guilt* pervaded their struggles to balance intimacy and scholarship:

> "Honestly, I lived an hour's drive from my close family members and have no spouse or children, so they did not suffer all that much. I wasn't able to spend much time with them and (I do recall missing mother's day and hearing my father's voice over the phone telling me 'well, you don't know how many more years your mother has left...'), so the *guilt* associated with neglect was real to me."

"The guilt wore me out," one woman succinctly said. In contrast, a male student describes the halcyon days of his studies:

> "I was at a wonderful time to do the program. I was living alone, my children were grown, I didn't have a day job for the entire time of the thesis writing, and my needs were relatively simple. The last six months of the program was a period of *temenos*, or sanctuary, for me. 'Student' was my primary role during that time of my life."

(4) The very key to student-centered studies – the opportunity to personalize one's own plan of study – creates the potential for vulnerability in adult learners.

While one might assume that independent programs such as ours inherently attract confident, self-directed learners who prize the chance to draw on their experiential learning and chart their own course, it is easy to forget that even the most intrepid of students call into question their abilities and knowledge, particularly at the inception of their program.

"During the Colloquium," one woman writes, "I had a moment of doubt, of not stacking up to the other students' breadth and life experiences. That was my closest to thinking there was no point in going on. I *felt* fearful and sad." A period of "floundering" is triggered by not thinking that "I would ever came up with anything acceptable or more/enough... I felt overwhelmed (uncertain, fearful, stupid)."

Another oft-cited point of severe doubt occurred when students received critical feedback about their writing early in the program. *What was said* was often lost to *how it felt* when beginning students were critiqued, as writing was synonymous with self.

"When I submitted my study plan," a student remembers, "the person who reviewed the plan was very negative. If it had not been for my core advisor, who pointed out the positive aspects and encouraged me, I don't know if I would have gone on."

At the latter stages of the program, the struggle to incorporate authentic voice into acceptable academic writing tests even the most accomplished of students:

> "It was time to write, begin writing the final document. I had spent 3 semesters reading and writing on topics that pertained to my area so I had tons of materials. But for the life of me I could not start. What could I say. I joke about this all the time but it was really frightening. What if I couldn't do this? What if I was too stupid? What if I had set myself up to do something that I was incapable of doing? Then I would get angry. Because I love the work I do, and want to do it, but in order to do so, I need this masters. But I can't write the final document/thesis. What would my husband say about the money spent? What would the school board say? They approved my hiring as the middle school principal's job for my practicum. What would people think? Just angry and frustrated. I was ready to say goodbye to the prospect of graduation, my core faculty said I was on the list. Finally – through a series of rare, spiritual moments of

> talking honestly with friends and colleagues, meditation, walking, contemplating. I saw that in fact I am quite capable of writing on any topic. I know my material. I know writing. I asked myself what I wanted to say, how did I want to say it, then said – 'I am a grown woman with a full life and successful career. I have done well, and can continue to do so. With probably an element of belligerence, I decided to write my topic with honestly and being true to myself. What's happened is that the writing began – and I have been able to find a way to balance my voice with the research. It seems to be working. This was a deep, personal experience. I brought out issues I've wrestled with since 3rd grade. Will the teacher like it? Will it be as good as the other kids'? Very hard stuff to face when you are 40."

The very experiences which test the student's character, and challenge her to grow, engender a constant "love/hate" battle waged throughout the program:

> "I found this program very difficult. I have had to challenge myself many times. This program has eaten at my self-doubt and self-concept. I have always worked very hard at traditional courses and done very well. In the beginning of this program, a student must research everything, basically alone. Then if not done properly, the student does everything again, alone. I find this program takes over my life. I finally got the study plan done for the third time. Then my writing was not up to the technical and psychological standards. I am into my program one year. I love it and I hate it. I love learning. I hate the fact there is no limit to the work. I have felt defeated, depressed, and alone. Likewise, I have felt triumphant, jubilant, and successful."

(5) Scholarship is, at times, an exceedingly isolating undertaking.

"The program's difficulty is the aloneness," one student says starkly. Locked into a passionate intellectual pursuit, the learner can become isolated from these around him/her:

> "As I went along with my study, it became more and more personal, which is what I wanted. I mean, that was the key with my reason for getting into the Norwich program – to join what I was doing at my work with my degree, and to make that work back and forth. But having chosen to study my own work place, to those around me, and myself, it became more and more of a personal thing, and there was a story I had to tell. It was very hard to communicate that to somebody from the outside who didn't have that... perhaps that passion."

At times, those most intimate to the student seemed like "outsiders," difficult to communicate with because they were not first-hand participants in the transformational experience.

> "I think that when you leave here after a weekend you've seen presentations, and you've seen passion that people have put into their studies and really truly it's a journey for people and they do go through change. You see that and you see the energy but also the pain and growth and you go home and think 'how can I take anything back with me and keep it alive for another month? And how can I express that to my family'? To be perfectly honest with you, they don't get it, and that's probably the hardest thing about it, is that people don't get it."

At its worst, the lack of common experience widened fissures in relational fault lines:

> "During the time that I was in the program, I got divorced... I have to say, at least in some part being in the program, dedicated to my study had something to do with the dissolution of my marriage. Probably the most difficult thing was just balancing the married life with the demands of professional life. No question about it. She was very supportive of my desire to this, but as time went on... she didn't realize what I was going to be doing. I'm not sure I did either. There was a friction there. She would want to go somewhere or do something, and I would say 'well, I don't know if I can. I really want to do this.' So it became this rub."

At the very best, significant others are often ill-prepared and ill-equipped to compete with the passion and sense of purpose which students bring to their self-designed study.

> "It's very funny, the reaction particularly of my friends, this time, because my family is getting used to my spending my life going to school. My friends are barely tolerant of it, and when I tell them that I have a paper due, they think that this is some frivolous little thing. I think because they've been away from it for so long that they don't see. I really think they are really jealous of it, to tell you the truth."

(6) In mentoring and peer relationships students find a sense of "community."

Despite the allure of "independent" study, even self directed students crave continuity and connections, a sense of academic "community." As numerous studies on resiliency have demonstrated, the presence of even one mentor in the lives of underprivileged young people is enough to inoculate them against the "slings and arrows" of their unfortunate circumstances. And an adult student transforms her ideas through her agenic community – her relationship to her faculty mentor.

Conversely, a faculty-student relationship which does not embody the qualities of true mentorship threatens successful completion. "After all," one student remarks pointedly, "graduate school already is set up to be a humbling experience; it doesn't need to be a *humiliating* one."

"The only times I recall being discouraged enough to quit," laments a graduate, "were following meetings with my first faculty advisor... He felt more like an adversary than a guide... I felt he was condescending, disrespectful... I couldn't communicate with him."

Disruptions in positive mentoring relationships, due to faculty reassignment or leaves, resulted in disruptions in student progress.

Like the mentors, student colleagues formed part of the "agenic community" of each learner. They serve as catalysts and confidantes, filling voids that many adults experienced in their personal and professional lives, with more veteran students modeling, in a Vygotsky-like sense, what is possible in the next "zone of development." Ironically, although the students had chosen a low-residency, distance education model and carried heavy role overloads throughout their programs, they craved being able "to touch base with other students and faculty more often." "Human-eye-to-eye-contact helps most people feel connected to others-in or outside an institution," one student poignantly reminds us. "All this technology might quicker and easier, enabling "better communication" but e-mailings, faxing and the like TO ME really is not the way to have human contact with others. In this word of high-tech technology, it would be of monumental assistance to grad students if you (the institution) could remember what Albert Einstein once said: "I'm afraid that our technology has surpassed our humanity."

Conclusions

While this study is currently in its inchoative stage, the salient themes that have emerged to date provide us with a deeper understanding of the student experience. It would appear that while student-centered, non-traditional programs provide uniquely personalized educational opportunities, the experience of such an educational process embodies more similarities than differences between and among students. And, as one student reminds us, "our needs as non-traditional adult learners are very different from our undergraduate or traditional graduate student counterparts." These shared experiences, as expressed in the findings, must form the basis on which institutions of higher education plan, implement, and evaluate their strategies for retention.

Is the journey worth the struggle? An emphatic "yes" is the answer from our study participants. As one graduate explains: "I experienced personal adversity in the course of my program, but given payoffs I would not hesitate, if necessary, to undertake this again. I am a better person for making this educational journey, and I have more options because of it. One cannot expect to attain more."

However, it is certain that in most students' lives, the attainment of their goals, the fulfillment of their personal journeys, was woven tightly into the fabric of their "other" lives, as well. Significant others – so often ignored in institutional program design – are key elements in the "picture of the future" and must become a focal point of greater consideration in institutional planning. Echoing the words of other respondents, one student summarizes succinctly:

> "Family members and/or significant others need to be sold on the program and the benefits it will offer in the long run. If the student can't be enthused about the program before he/she begins, and if he or she can't get buy-in from those around him/her, then reconsider if the program is right or if the timing is right. It is not fair to impose this MA degree on a spouse or significant other without clear understanding about roles and responsibilities and agreed upon ways of monitoring compliance. It is helpful to focus on the end result of the process and the benefit it will bring. Building a picture of the future after graduation helps to get everyone focused off of the tactics and onto the strategy. It makes the study itself merely the means to a bright end. It also allows time to plan for others to pursue their own dreams and desires in the future."

Experiences With a Web-Based Distance Learn Graduate Program: A Review of Two Pilot Courses

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Collaborative learning can be fostered and encouraged by designing computer-delivered distance learn courses that deliberately encourage teamwork and group projects. This paper describes experiences in fostering collaborative learning through computer mediated communication in a variety of forms among graduate students in a new nursing administration and health care informatics program delivered via a web-based education platform. Some of the initial data from two pilot courses in this new distance learn graduate program is presented. There was a stark contrast in the amount of communication and collaboration among students in a course which required such participation and the other pilot course which had no built-in group activities or communication requirements. Without required participation in team activities and despite frequent encouragement, the self-paced course group communicated rarely on the learning platform. The other group communicated frequently in several different modes accommodated by the learning platform.

Collaboration has not been espoused as a cultural value in the United States or within its institutions. Americans tend to value and reward individualism and individual efforts. Though corporations have been using collaborative organizational models for many years in this country, "the pyramidal form of organization...still remains the dominant organizational form in our most prominent public service institutions, including health and education" (Hobbs, 1998, p.606). This must change if health care delivery systems are to remain viable, however. Students moving into leadership positions in the next century must be prepared to function in a team-oriented, collaborative environment (Pew Health Professions Commission, 1995, The President's Advisory Commission, 1998). Clearly, there is a need to encourage our students to adopt the practice of collaboration as their primary model of work and problem solving and for them to see collaboration as a valued enterprise.

The realm of health care delivery is growing increasingly complex as new players and power structures emerge and the scope of health delivery moves from institutions to larger community and organizational systems. Preparing graduate students to practice in leadership roles in this dynamic environment is a challenge for campus-based programs. Graduate-level preparation for roles in health care management via the Internet is a new endeavor for Regents College and represents one of the few such programs in the nation. Intra-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary collaboration as both practice and cultural value will be imperative in the world our students will practice in and help manage. What models can we use to encourage collaborative activities? How to instill collaboration as a valued activity? How to accomplish this with students from Eastern Long Island to Hawaii working away at their lonesome computer terminals? "How can we move these virtual chairs into a circle?"(Kimball, 1995, p.5)

Background

It is an axiom of higher education that graduate students be able to carry on discussion and debate, be able to defend their point of view but be well-versed enough to explicate many perspectives gleaned from the literature. Graduate students must be able to articulate their higher level thinking abilities to an ever-widening audience beyond faculty to peers and to other disciplines. In traditional classrooms on college campuses this is accomplished through discussion led by the teacher of the course, through assignments designed to be group exercises, and in the hallways, parking lots and campus cafeterias where students gather to continue discussions or work through group projects. A student's primary dialogue in this model, however, takes place between student and curricular materials (texts, lectures, and the literature of the discipline) and student and faculty (lectures, queries in the classroom, office hours, and the written paper or project which only the professor and student are privy to, generally). Some courses rely on student presentations to encourage dialogue between peers. Sometimes this is an effective method and sometimes it is not. The degree of discussion and debate that take place often depend on the class environment developed by the teacher and by the cohort of students as well.

Computer mediated communication within educational programs has made it possible for a new and different dialogue to take place in graduate education. In asynchronous modes students can read each other's work and comment, and can work on projects together even though they live on different sides of the continent. Students and faculty alike are not restricted by the typical sociological forces at work in the classroom whereby the loudest but not necessarily the brightest students get to express themselves! In synchronous communication such as an online chat room, a student's ability or opportunity to contribute to discussion is limited only by the speed with which he or she is able to type a response and the volume of traffic on the Web at the time of the conversation. "Educational computer conferencing does not entirely eliminate domination by a few participants, but it does ensure that dominance by a few does not exclude the ability of others to have their say" (Harasim , Hiltz, Teles, and Turoff , 1995, p. 87).

Regents College is a purely distance learn institution and has been since its inception more than 25 years ago. Though graduate education is a new challenge, serving the adult learner at a distance is not. The transition to computer-based models has been a steady evolution at the College. Though many of the College's students are from educationally underserved populations, people who generally have little access to computers, the students who are interested in the graduate programs have tended to be those with access to the Internet and a computer. Many of the inquiries about the program have come via e-mail.

Program development at Regents College is a unique process. In the case of the graduate programs, it began several years ago with the recruitment of faculty from a nationwide search for experts in the content area fields of informatics, management and graduate nursing core curricula. These faculty advisory committees then outlined the foci for each area and eventually for each course and/or examination. The courses were designed using several models of computer-based educational delivery. The two primary models are the cohort course , in which students register in groups of 15-20 for a discreet time frame and the self-paced course, in which students register at any point and then proceed at their own pace for a maximum period of twelve months. A faculty person who is an expert in the field of a particular course topic is then recruited to serve as the online facilitator of the course. He or she sends materials that will aid students in exploring the content and in preparing for the exam. These materials are then adapted into a visually attractive format and mounted onto the learning platform at the College (it is difficult to do this remotely). Faculty (and faculty are located nationwide) are then available online within the platform as facilitators or consultants for the students enrolled in the course.

There are two programs available in health care at the graduate level , one a master's in Clinical Systems Management for nurses and the other an interdisciplinary certificate in Health Care Informatics. The full programs have begun this fall but two of the courses common to both the Informatics Certificate Program and the Master's curricula were piloted this spring. To best serve our students we made an effort to incorporate some of the lessons learned by others, found in the growing literature of computer mediated communication and Web-based educational delivery, to the design of the individual course pages. These are some of the preliminary findings of those piloted courses. What worked, what didn't, and what next.

Experiences Common to Both Programs

The pilot courses represented two of the four different models of course delivery utilized by the full program. There is a cohort model in which students enroll in a course for a discreet 15- week period with a group of 15-20 others. Self-paced courses in the program allow students to enroll and proceed through the course materials at their own pace and take the end of course assessment within twelve months of enrollment. Seminar courses are similar to the cohort courses with a 15- week time frame and 15-20 student cohort group but have different assignment requirements. The final course in the Master's Program is a Capstone with a three-day "on-campus" seminar component and a performance examination.

The learning platform used for the program is Lotus LearningSpace® (LLS). The decision to use this as our base was the result of an examination of many factors not the least of which included affiliation with a reputable organization such as IBM, which offers this Lotus product. The platform is also entirely Web-based so students are not required to load anything onto their computers. It is also compatible for use with Apple computers so students are not forced to buy any hardware to participate in the program. No platform is perfect but we have been successful so far in our efforts to work with LLS.

"The primary difficulties teachers and students report are related to technical problems" (Harasim et al, p. 219) and the pilot experience was certainly no different. Online learning and the platform we used are not familiar to students even though most of them presented themselves as confident computer users. To insure that subscribing, logging on to the system, and maneuvering around LLS did not become an impediment to learning, students were sent an in-house produced CD-ROM tutorial for LLS a few weeks prior to the beginning of the courses. They were also added to a listserv, monitored by staff educators and technical staff, so they could ask questions and receive guidance. Though Lotus does publish a tutorial that was sent to students as well, there was a need to augment the hard copy. Unfortunately, the first two weeks of both courses were spent sorting through these issues. Instead of moving into the content, students spent some of the allotted course time familiarizing themselves with the platform.

Included in this orienting process is a computer self- assessment tool administered online. This is purely a self-assessment tool for the students. Individual scores are made accessible only to each student and to College administrative staff so as not to bias the faculty and to avoid having the students scurry to resources to answer correctly. Student scores surprised us given that this was a group whose members had been told that they would need to bring to the program certain basic computer skills to succeed in the program. The student scores ranged from 14-80 on a scale of 100. We had to start thinking of them as eager beginners. Fortunately, a remediation module had been developed that guided the students to resources to help them increase their skill level in various content areas in which they were deficient. We have decided, as a result of the problems encountered during the pilot with initial student-technology interface, to require students to complete the computer basics self assessment and perform a group of tasks related to using the platform before they even get near the curriculum. We hope this will result in fewer problems during the courses themselves.

It is always important to pay attention to the look of the screen students will encounter, much as classroom educators seek to present traditional campus-based courses in accessible ways. There must be deliberate effort to present course materials in a friendly and easy to use style in any computer delivered courses. The rudiments of design include the use of white space, using readable style, including colorful but not overwhelming graphics, pictures and charts, and maintaining a plain type face with occasional variety of color and font for emphasis (Cornell and Martin, 1997, Ritchie and Hoffman, 1997). Educators from traditional institutions and content experts in their fields may not always be able to mount their courses onto the platform in an easily accessible and stylized manner. If the course work is not readily accessible, easy to follow and read and respond to, the technology begins to overwhelm the curriculum. Regents College hires faculty from all over the country to serve as content experts to guide the process of examination development and determine guided learning tool content. We were able to utilize this network to access some of the most renowned educators in various fields to serve as faculty for the courses. Because of the limits of LLS (there is no practical editing function from a remote site) and time constraints on the part of faculty who all work elsewhere, staff educators have assumed the task of mounting the curricular materials onto the platform. This assures that faculty will not have to acquire a whole new set of skills unique to LLS and allows for consistency of format from course to course.

The Cohort

The activities we hope our students engage in such as collaborative learning, discussion and teamwork do not happen magically with adult learners who are always battling time constraints and pressures. "These elements are not inherent in the technology but must be fostered by course design, instructor engagement, and student behavior."(Eastmond , 1998, p.37) There must be incentives for students to participate in group activities. We have decided not to grade participation in teamwork but to require students to contribute to team discussions at least twice weekly to pass the course. This may have lead to some inhibition in participation.(Harasim et al, 1995). Adult students often have to be gently coaxed into this brave new world of teamwork. This may be particularly true of the large number of pilot students who were also graduates of the Regents College baccalaureate nursing program. These students obtained their undergraduate degree in a program that requires tremendous self-directedness and individual effort. Many of them had never even been in contact with another student during the course of their Regents degree program. What a shock to be required to work in a team for a class project!

The cohort course was designed with a series of group projects. Five students were assigned to one of three teams with a rotating student facilitator. Questions and assignments were posed by the faculty member who then adopted the role of facilitator and monitored the resultant dialogue. There were the usual issues of non-participation which were perhaps more obvious in this forum because the faculty had access to all the students' interactions. Using the asynchronous threaded discussion area, students were to post to their teams their thoughts, ideas, and work. The student facilitator would then summarize the group's discussion and post a document for the faculty and the rest of the class to read.

This pilot cohort, including the faculty person, found the threaded discussion space fairly complicated and "non-user-friendly," as one student noted. Students and faculty resorted to e-mail which grew cumbersome for the professor and did not support the accessibility of such communication to peers. We will require subsequent students to work with the threaded discussion section in a practice course before beginning actual course work. This may improve their ability to maneuver through this area.

"Effective online teamwork requires clearly defined tasks, principles for decision making, roles, labor distribution, and timelines, which should be established in advance by the students or the teacher or both" (Harasim et al.,1995, p.130). In the case of the cohort pilot course, these roles, etc. were well defined and worked well. Student questions that emerged initially revolved around how to summarize teamwork and proved to be an opportunity to teach fundamental skills in collaborative writing. Writing skills are honed and reinforced in the course of scholarly work and course assignments such as papers and summaries. Computer mediated communication is an ideal medium for the improvement of these crucial skills. When students are asked to write for an audience broader than just the teacher of the class their writing tends to improve (Eastmond, 1998). Group projects encourage group writing, an activity required by most professions.

Students in the cohort were assigned to groups of five. This is larger than some researchers suggest (Harasim et al., 1995). Though the attrition rate in the course was reasonable (20%) one of the teams coincidentally lost three out of five of its members leaving only two students to maintain a work level established for five students. The faculty person opted to maintain the groups as they had been originally formulated and instructed the two to proceed as a dyad. Though there probably is value in creating groups of three or four members at the outset, concerns about attrition will prevent us from changing the five member group pattern until we have gathered more data. The students had difficulty as a whole completing the number of assignments in the time allotted. Other faculty on the informatics advisory board who have had experience facilitating online courses suggested organizing the assignments differently to give the groups fewer assignments with more content in each assignment. The student groups could then determine their own schedules for assignment completion. This would encourage students to discuss their schedules at the outset of the course and devise a group strategy for completion of assignments for the whole semester. Such group activity turns a teaching strategy into curriculum. It is just this sort of collaborative work we hope to foster and encourage in our students.

The Self-paced Group Experience

In distinct contrast to the cohort group, where the threaded discussion area is full of entries and students spent hours as teams meeting in chat, the self-paced discussion space is nearly blank. The members of the self-paced course, despite urging form the faculty and staff, have not formed groups or done any collaborative work that is visible on the platform in the asynchronous threaded discussion spaces. It is possible that they are communicating with each other via e-mail. It has been difficult to gather data about them because of the lack of communication. We will know more as evaluation materials are returned.

Attendance at one of two scheduled chats was sparse. At other times, the students frequently logged into the chat area but found no one else in the space and quickly logged out. The students in this self-paced group who posted the highest number of messages in the beginning of the course have continued to do so. They are the students visibly speeding through the work at the mid-point as evidenced by their questions to the faculty person about the end of course assessment. It sometimes seems as though there are only three people out of 25 actually taking the course! Posting often and early seems to be a predictor of success in our pilot program. Other educators have found this to be a predictor of success as well(Harasim et al., 1995).

Few students have responded to queries posted by the facilitator regarding their progress. They are given a twelve month window in which to complete the self-guided learning assignments and take the end of course assessment. It seems that some may take the entire twelve months.

Plans for Improving Course Delivery

The faculty member of the cohort course expressed a lack of comfort with her ability to access team discussion. She felt that she was invading the student's privacy to some extent. We plan to create and maintain a guide for faculty that will include their comments and experiences as shared data for subsequent faculty. Literature on the subjects of computer mediated communication and Web sites for their use will also be made available. Faculty support and education is a key to the success of the program.

We are looking at alternate ways to configure the teams so that students do not feel "stuck" with a non-participating member but are able to build a sense of trust and community which is so crucial to online communication (Kollock, 1996, Ravitz, 1997, McVay, 1998).

We do intend to send to students, as an initial series of readings, a message about online behavior. After the pilot students were signed onto a listserv, there was a flurry of excited introductory messages. These came to an abrupt halt when a student complained about receiving too much e-mail from the group. This is a good example of Harasim and her colleague's observation that, "people can have their feelings hurt online more easily than they can off" (1995,p.231). It is not possible to avoid all such interactions but faculty and staff have worked to model cautious and friendly online communication whenever possible. Without face to face interaction our meanings can be easily misconstrued.

The pilot courses will continue to yield rich data as they come to a close and students complete their end of course assessments. One of the benefits of administering courses online is the archiving capabilities of all communication that takes place within the platform- already transcribed! In the meantime, we are able to constantly update and improve the courses and orientation because it is Web-based. So far, student commentary has been positive about the curriculum and mixed about their interface with the technology. We look forward to examining the data from the pilot and contributing to the growing body of knowledge in computer mediated communication and distance education in the near future.

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Extending the Boundaries of Graduate Education

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> *I never thought that a university would ever come here and provide me with the education I wanted when I needed it.*
>
> (Recent M. Ed. graduate, Terrace, BC)

Contemporary observers have identified significant changes in the provision of higher education in industrialized countries (Barnett, 1997; Burgess, 1997; Tierney, 1993). They note how such provision is responding to recent social and economic developments and also being modified to accommodate the learning needs and interests of a changing university student population. It seems as if universities are beginning to embrace such concepts as a "learning society," "knowledge economy," or "lifelong learning."

Recent research studies also variously examine how the goals, purposes, and practices of higher education are changing to meet the needs of an increasingly highly trained and skilled workforce in economies marked by globalization, international competition, and rapid technological change. While some studies explore the impact of such changes on university governance, funding, resources, and planning (Miller, 1999; Small, 1995) or on the experiences of students (Roberts and Higgins, 1992; Woodley et al, 1987), few pay much attention to how these issues affect teaching and learning or how specific programs might promote pedagogical initiatives or the production and recognition of different types of knowledge. Even those studies that do explore these issues tend to focus either on university students in general (e.g., Lockwood, 1997; McNair, 1998) or more closely on undergraduate education (Ramsden, 1992; Wilson, 1997).

Yet, as undergraduate programs are being forced to adapt to changing circumstances so too are their graduate counterparts. Graduate programs can offer comparatively greater flexibility to fit particular social and academic circumstances and, in Canada at least, have evolved into a wide variety of models that provide education more closely tied to students' experiences and needs. In particular, many graduate programs have developed ways to accommodate the interests of so-called "non-traditional" adult learners. This paper examines one such model — Simon Fraser University's practice-oriented M. Ed. degree program — which provides graduate education to cohorts of non-traditional adult learners based on ideas of transformational learning.

SFU's Program

Those universities in British Columbia which offer graduate degree programs in education are all located in the extreme south-west of the province and are generally inaccessible to those who live outside a 75 mile radius. A sizable population of teachers and other educational workers are thus excluded from traditional graduate study. Ironically, the provincial universities were slow to appreciate this situation; instead, certain entrepreneurial US-based universities began to develop "on-site" programs in educational administration and curriculum specifically for Canadian students. By the early 1990s, an increasingly embarrassing number of Canadian educators were obtaining graduate degrees from US universities. Simon Fraser University (SFU) began its program largely to stem this "invasion."

Since the early 1990s, SFU has offered a model M. Ed. Degree program to groups of students based in several BC communities far removed from the home campus. Among Canadian graduate programs in education, SFU's approach is unique for a combination of reasons: it's based on a cohort model, is open to non-traditional students who don't fulfill the normal graduate entrance requirements, is offered off-campus, and is designed to be attractive to those who wish to complete a graduate degree while remaining in their own communities. In addition, each program is specifically designed to allow participants the opportunity to explore the philosophical, cultural, and political contexts of their role as educators while also remaining at work. Most importantly, the program fosters a transformative leadership emphasis so as to enhance participants' self-perceptions as active learners and leaders of change in the organizations and institutions with whom they work.

While most of SFU's early cohorts of students came from the K-12 sector, each group contained at least one or two individuals who worked in some form of adult or post-secondary education. Never a group to let their own needs be subjugated to those of their school-based counterparts, these adult educators were also critical of the schooling processes that had failed so many of those they taught. Hence, they became increasingly disenchanted with the avowedly K-12 orientation of the early programs and began to press for cohort groups to be formed purely from within their own ranks. In 1995, the first of several post-secondary education groups was formed. To date, seven such cohort groups have been developed across the British Columbia.

Students

All of the students in these local cohort groups are accomplished education professionals, with a minimum of at least five years experience as educators. Although the majority work in community colleges or other formal post-secondary educational institutions, not everyone comes from such conventional settings. For example, recent groups have contained educators from such areas as social work, dentistry, the arts, sports coaching, government training programs, and the environment. Such students often report feeling marginal in that their work falls outside both the mainstream activities associated with their profession as well as with more standard educational settings. In addition, because these students come to their education work more from communities of practice than through conventional educational channels, they often lack formal academic qualifications.

Given that such students do not possess normally accepted qualifications, have not followed the customary route from successful completion of schooling into higher education, and tend to be considerably older than the normal entry age (25) for graduate students, they can be labeled as "non-traditional" (Taylor, 1997). SFU's guidelines for the acceptance of such students into its off-campus graduate program require that students fulfill certain criteria deemed equivalent to the possession of a Bachelor's degree. Of course, such criteria include prior academic qualifications but also encompass students' non-academic educational, professional and administrative backgrounds, their experience in curricular and administrative leadership, their ability to document and describe such experiences and their future goals, and other's estimation of their potentials for graduate study and continuing educational leadership.

As non-traditional learners often have little recent experience of formal education they can lack both confidence in their academic abilities and practice in learning and study skills (Richardson and King, 1998). Yet, ironically, adult students can also have the advantage over their younger counterparts. Adult students tend to be more motivated by intrinsic than vocational goals, have a significant reserve of prior life experiences which they can use as a basis for learning, tend to develop strong peer relationships with peers, and are concerned that their education is both more meaningful and relevant to their lives. As such, they tend to evince a deeper approach to learning — one that values wisdom and interpretative, contextualized, and relativistic conceptions of learning rather than one concerned merely with reproducing course material for "the exam." Both the comparative strengths and weaknesses of these non-traditional students have served to modify the structure and content of the program.

Program

The program itself consists of a two year (six semester) series of taught courses followed by a comprehensive examination. Students generally take one course each semester—held in their home locality on alternate weekends. In the middle of each program lies a 6-week summer residential session where students from the various cohort groups mix in a variety of courses held on the SFU home campus. All courses are what one might normally expect in an education graduate program: introductions to recent educational trends and developments; program planning, implementation, and evaluation; educational philosophies; courses on the political and social contexts of education; and on teaching and learning, etc. However, two distinguishing features are the concluding graduate seminar and the form of the comprehensive examination. Each of these is specifically designed to allow students to revisit and review their learning from previous courses, document any subsequent effects on their educational practice, and develop a portfolio of reflective tools to further their professional development.

The graduate seminar — usually the last course that students take — promotes the idea that a deeper understanding of adult educators' professional development can be based around such notions as self-directed learning, critical reflection, and transformative learning. The course provides specific strategies for developing critical thinking and allows students to apply a series of techniques to foster greater autonomy in, and self-management of, their own professional development. The comprehensive exam — written over a two-week period at the completion of all coursework — is a structured opportunity for students to choose one aspect (perhaps a specific topic or a more general theme) from their previous studies and explore it in greater depth and from a variety of dissimilar perspectives. In this way, students come to integrate their own ideas with those of others and learn to appreciate the interconnectedness of several different branches of educational research and study. Of course, these traits may be said to be the objective of most graduate programs. However, the high percentage of non-traditional students requires that the program addresses these issues more explicitly by including programmatic innovations in its design. What has been found particularly helpful in achieving academic success for such non-traditional students has been the intentional use of cohort groups that, throughout the two-year period, encourage transformational learning.

Cohort Groups

Group learning has long been a feature of most types of adult education, yet its systematic use in more formal academic programs is more recent. For most higher education institutions, the attraction of cohort groups lies mainly in their simplicity and expedience. As the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning/American Council of Education (1993) report on Adult Degree Programs identifies, cohort groups provide a model that is relatively inexpensive and administratively manageable. Of late, however, more educators are also realizing their potential for enhancing learning (Barnett and Muse, 1993; Basom et al, 1996; Brooks, 1998; Reynolds and Hebert, 1995).

Basically, a cohort is a group of students who begin and complete a program of studies together over a specified period. In general, the cohort group remains intact; although students may take certain additional courses individually (based on personal interest or need), the core of the program is undertaken as a group. In SFU's model, students remain in their cohort group for five of the six semesters, only separating in the summer intensive at the end of the first year. Here, they choose two courses from an array of six and rarely find themselves working with more than three or four others from their cohort group.

Barnett and Muse (1993) suggest that for a cohort group to be successful, certain types of non-traditional methods and organizational strategies should be employed. These include initial development activities, ongoing reflective seminars, preparation for work, and the continued, long-term interactive involvement of students. Of course, one issue arises before the group has ever formed — the selection of potential cohort members. Some universities employ extensive screening procedures to select students and ensure a diverse group based on gender, ethnicity, learning style, experience, and aspiration. However, in SFU's experience, the emphasis on the "localness" of the group has yielded such richness and diversity in areas of practice that its screening has focused chiefly on experience and aspirations.

Cohorts work best if they can themselves engender a supportive learning environment. Indeed, Brooks argues that cohort groups "require little or no need for activities which try to foster initial group cohesion" (1998, p. 67). However, SFU has found it beneficial for each group to develop an early sense of cohesion among cohort members if only for encouraging students' commitment to creating a learning climate based upon trust, openness and mutual respect. Because such an environment cannot be assumed to occur naturally, the initial coursework is designed to engender an environment where students feel able to challenge each other (and the instructors) and share their tentative and developing understandings. As Carol, a student in a current cohort describes,

> Cohorts are created not born. They are successful when everyone works collaboratively and collectively on improving their own and others' learning experiences. It takes self-responsibility, patience, courage, humour, commitment, sensitivity, and a lot of hard work to create such an enriching learning for everybody.

Essential to this process is the provision of adequate time for reflection and meta-learning. Initial courses generally require students to collectively produce and share materials and resources and keep "learning journals" where they can reflect on the course readings and activities as well as gain some insight into their own emotional and cognitive rhythms as learners. These activities can help create a sense of student ownership of, and responsibility for, learning as students work together to shape the content of the program. A common view in adult education — if not yet widely accepted in many universities — is that adult learners and their teachers can be partners in the common enterprise of making meaning. As Peter, a recent graduate put it,

> I thought we'd spend all our time listening to lectures. In fact we've done most of the talking. Most of the teachers didn't tell us what to think but helped us think for ourselves. And, although I've learned a lot from them, I feel I've learned just as much from my fellow students. Our greatest asset has been each other.

His cohort colleague, Brenda, also spoke about this aspect of collaborative learning:

> The dynamics of working in such a group are so different from working on your own — you get other perspectives, have to defend your own, sometimes you change what you think. The end result is way more than just the sum of the parts.

Another core emphasis is assisting students with their continuing professional development. Based on the notion that change is a process rather than an event, such development is regarded as ongoing and continuous and linked inexorably with educator's daily practices. Consequently, SFU's program builds professional development activities into every course; further, it challenges students to engage intellectually with the assumptions and values that lie behind their practices on a daily and ongoing basis.

The professional development of educators is not only a matter of personal choice but is also affected by organizational, social, and cultural factors. SFU's program tries to enable its students to first identify the barriers and constraints to implementing change in their institutions and organizations and, second, to strategize how these might be overcome by educators acting together. Of course, this cannot be just contained within the program's two-year span. Throughout, carefully fostered activities such as use of peer-editing and e-mail discussion groups and study circles are designed to help students (and graduates) — many of whom work in isolation — keep in touch with one another long after their program has ended. As Hargreaves (1994) identifies, students need not be just technical learners but social learners too. This concern with staying in touch to further the promotion of change underpins the second feature of SFU's program: that of transformational learning.

Transformational Learning

The SFU program purposely seeks to promote the notion of learning as transformation. Its thrust lies towards encouraging students to develop their own understandings of themselves as learners as they move from passive recipients to active creators of knowledge. Theories of adult learning suggest that this process is enhanced by the inclusion of specific opportunities for reflection and practice. As Gibbs (1981) identifies, the skills required to be an effective learner are best acquired in the context of students' everyday academic activities. Hence, by the end of their program, students feel confident and able to assume the authority to shape their own concluding examination questions to suit their own areas of interest and expertise.

The theory of transformative learning is a recent body of work that has made a significant impact on current ideas about how adults learn (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1998). In essence, transformative learning is the cognitive process by which people revise prior interpretations of the meaning of their experience in order to construe new interpretations and to guide their future actions. Transformative learning theory is loosely based upon Habermas's (1971) typology of human interest and knowledge. Early programs of educator development concentrated on developing teacher's stock of instrumental knowledge – witness the myriad studies on "teacher effectiveness." Yet, such a narrow concern is now regarded as inadequate for a full understanding of the complexities of educational settings and practices and recent programs now focus on Habermas's other types of interest and knowledge: the practical and the emancipatory. As Cranton (1996) describes, "our practical interests lead us to want to understand each other and the norms of our society. Our emancipatory interests lead us to critically question perceived constraints and to work towards self-awareness" (p. 141).

Such transformation does not occur in the abstract. Because the central process of transformative learning is critical reflection, SFU's program encourages students to examine the philosophical, cultural, and political contexts of their work and develop and extend what philosopher Charles Taylor (1985) calls their "constituent self-understandings." It does this by initially asking students to develop a personal "theory of practice" – a broad view of their own practice as an educator and the set of philosophical assumptions, beliefs, and values that lie behind it. Of course, theories of practice are context-bound and students are also encouraged to reflect upon, and theorize about, the social contexts of their work as well as the content of such work. In other words, when detailing their educational practices, students are not only expected to formulate explicitly what it is they do and describe the activities central to it, but also to articulate and examine the norms which are essential to it, identify any inherent contradictions, and explore possible alternatives.

This is not always a simple task. Most students bring an essentially practical orientation to understanding their work and initially resist developing more abstract or theoretical meanings. To challenge this, the program tries to introduce the view, first, that a fuller explanation of the social practices that mark educational situations and activities requires certain self-descriptions on the part of participants. Furthermore, students are encouraged to consider that these descriptions are neither as individual nor as unique as might be at first supposed but can be seen as part of a interrelated set of commonly-held concepts, beliefs, assumptions, values, and interpretations. Joanne, a college department head, provides a good example:

> We had this reading on dealing with the political realities of teaching. When I first read it I thought it was common sense if a bit overly cynical – you know keep your head down, build alliances, choose your battles etc. Then, in class, each of us had to describe an incident where we'd had to exercise some aspect of political survival at work. I was amazed at what the others said. I thought I was the only one who had ever experienced ignorance and bigotry from my superiors. It seems as if everyone had a similar story to tell. Now I see that it's in some way built in to the system... it's as if I'm treated like this so I'll then pass it on to the students. That's not what education should be about.

As Joanne's comment shows, making individual interpretations and assumptions public can show that they have a collective character and might form part of a received hegemonic system that privileges certain understandings and downplays others. Further, such dominant understandings are played out (and, hence, can be seen) in everyday practices and situations in what Roger Simon (1992) calls a "social grammar" of education. In short, students learn that a full appreciation and explanation of educational phenomena requires that students make the contexts in which their work is embedded both explicit and problematic.

This process is aided by the strong characteristic of adult learners to want to make sense of their experiences. In the cohort groups, the diversity in student backgrounds provides a rich resource of experiences upon which to reflect. In addition, the program encourages learners to develop a common concern for exploring the opportunities for learning inherent in those experiences. A telling example is provided by George, another recent graduate:

> I was exposed to many different ideas and perspectives and ways of thinking and learning. For example, one student's emotional responses (particularly her anger) forced me to ask why I am not nearly as emotional about learning. In one class, she said she was so angered by what she had read that she wanted to throw the book against the wall. In reflecting on my response to the same material, although I disagreed with what had been written I certainly didn't feel like throwing the book or even slamming it down on the table. I realized that I am more measured in my response.... The point is that I shouldn't become more like her but rather her responses prompted me to ask questions about my own emotional responses to learning which made me more aware of how I learn.

Conclusion

As the access to higher education widens and the number of adult students enrolling in university programs continues to grow, new forms of organizing education will need to be found that acknowledge, accommodate, and respect non-traditional adult students' concerns and interests. Universities will be under increasing pressure to generate new forms of graduate (and undergraduate) programs and provide wider opportunities for lifelong learners than they do at present.

How universities respond to these challenges can be related to the extent that they respond to such concepts as lifelong learning. For many in higher education, the primary purpose of universities will continue to be the preparation of young people for citizenship and the world of work. Notions of lifelong learning may appear in the rhetoric of mission statements and policy documents, but the conventional systems of admission, selection, teaching, and assessment will remain relatively unchanged. Other institutions, while still keeping their core purpose as the creation, dissemination, and preservation of knowledge, will likely increasingly incorporate lifelong learning into their provision. Curricula, pedagogy, and the structure and systems of delivery will be altered to respect the very different approach of organizing education around learners rather than around a discipline.

Whatever the approach, the presence of increasing numbers of non-traditional learners in higher education presents a challenge to conventional university teacher-centered pedagogies. Adult students are much less inclined to conform to the restrictions that shape traditional approaches to university education and more inclined to hold institutions accountable for the education they offer. As universities accept more and more non-traditional adult students, they are going to have to listen much more closely to what such students want, need, and expect.

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Pedagogy for the Community: Integrating Multi-dimensional Research and Multimedia for the Learning Needs of Conventional and Non-conventional Students

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Active learning techniques have an established effect upon student learning. The approaches we use can invite various adults to actively participate in an inclusive process of multidisciplinary learning.

Concepts of learners, educators and educational systems are evolving in interesting ways and at various rates around the world. While the process of change associated with industrial advancement is not unknown, history clearly describes the process stemming from London's adjustment to technical and social advances associated with workers needs during the industrial revolution (Jarvis, 1999) Contemporary technological innovations are similarly generating rippling effects. We are continuing to analyze conditions and adapt to the influences and demands presented by interest in future occupations as well as economic and social development.

We are observing shifts in our assumptions about types of students, the time involved in education, and the purposes for which education is required. Simultaneously, we are urged to collaborate through a policy process to engage members of the community in developing community learning for sustained progress and development.

The means by which existing educational bodies participate in planning and implementing learning communities is in part represented by the process and product of educators addressing these issues. (Shaver, 1999)

Historically, educational approaches have been connected to systems of exclusion based on class issues. There are salient arguments that schools cannot provide effective, accountable teaching if segments of learners or potential learner groups are excluded from access to progressive education (Friere, 1991; Gil, 1998; Rothenberg, 1998) Jarvis describes the social pressure on universities to recognize the school system has not always enabled the most able children to achieve. (1999)

In helping to prepare citizens for global workforce needs, the adult educator's effectiveness is important. Effectiveness involves providing educational programming through improved access to all types of learners, and that engages citizens in local policy development (Shaver, 1999). By expanding concepts of the learning group to life long learners and to include techniques for access to all students (learners) we are more likely to improve our effectiveness as educators. And, if we are providing more accountable teaching we are likely to encourage and include more citizens in the policy process as well. Our focus here is on how educators can reach out through creative approaches to all adult learners in our communities.

Adult learners

Although many may imagine adult learners as students who may be retired with time energy and resources for lifelong learning, many adult learners are still working adults with family responsibilities, who need to upgrade their skills and who may not feel confident about returning to school. Many are returning to the classroom after years to pursue education they were unable to acquire earlier in their lives. Adult learners include male and female citizens of color, immigrants, workers, people of leisure, and others.

Technically, some schools consider adult learners to be 24 years or older, perhaps a veteran, someone who has had a hiatus from education for four or more years and who is likely to have had multiple adult roles. (AAPM) Motivation factors for education may vary. Some adults may be motivated for intrinsic rewards but many are seeking to resume education for job advancement opportunities and salary increases. As they consider resuming education, many experience fears (Siebert and Gilpin, 1996) and anxiety about their capacity to compete and succeed. Adult learners bring various learning styles, quality of educational background, emotional issues, time pressures and different levels of interest to the learning environment.

In contrast, the conventional student was one with resources for full time academic involvement who relied on the print medium for much of the learning. In fact, students were expected to be able to live on campus and conduct scholarly pursuits especially reading, around the clock. Traditional learners also tended to select a college and continue for four years toward graduation.

As technological and economic situations have changed the student population has become transformed. Students operate and learn differently. Having grown up with television, video games and computers, most post 1950's citizens are more monitor savvy. Game players are accustomed to interactive protocols. Yet, many potential students do not have ready resources available to subsidize their academic interest. They explore the cost of education and seek programs they can enroll in that allow them to work and oftentimes, manage families.

As the need for education increases to gain entry even to entry level positions, the non-conventional adult learner includes many who were not typically included in the "acceptable" student population. Not only have students become increasingly female, they are more often people of color, people of various nationalities and people of older ages. Adults learners need information , knowledge and skills regarding parenting, dealing with medical and health problems, and to make informed personal and civic decisions. (Best and Eberhard, 1990). Some need basic skills and many need further academic and technological skills for the jobs they have and want. Workplaces are assessing these changes and some are attempting to accommodate the needs for information by offering on site training or supporting educational programs tailored for their staff needs.

Since some non-conventional learners include students who dropped out of the typical classroom environment because it did not address their needs or provide the supports needed for success, they are seeking programs that can meet their needs. More students have been observed to take introductory courses at community colleges or in community locations before transferring to four year schools or applying to graduate programs. Steady growth in higher education has occurred since 1975 in public community colleges. (Murray, 1996www.apa.org/monitor/mar96/collega.html)

Surveys in the U.S and Canada indicate that workers increasingly report their intentions to enroll in additional education in the short term future in programs outside the formal education system. Increasing growth in adult education participation is also occurring in Scandinavia, Sweden, Germany and England. (Livingston,1999)

Adult education is being shaped by social and economic needs and by the diverse nature of the adult population. Planning to develop an educational system to address these needs must incorporate the perspectives and needs of the total community labor force, educators, business and community leaders and others. Educational planning must involve representatives of all those with a stake in our collective futures.

Contemporary teaching: Pedagogical styles, technology and change

In exploring the needs of adult learners it is necessary to examine traditional pedagogy which has emphasized the teacher as the expert. Evidence continuously exists that demonstrates the difficulty educators have in demonstrating flexibility in preparing for the diverse adult population. Educators continually ignore the need to develop learning modules around learner needs. The resistance to design curriculum for particular audiences includes lack of information about the diverse population of adult learners (Stilborne and Williams, 1996) Often, educators have resisted opportunities to work with and learn from diverse populations. Additionally, teacher frames of reference regarding early student work experiences may no longer be relevant to current student populations. Many early jobs teachers are familiar with have been relocated to other countries.

The current influx of new technology has shifted the emphasis on how the instructor can integrate technology into the classroom. However, the key to progress lies in educating communities to produce a more educated workforce to benefit us all. This requires more responsibility to the collective society rather than on the educator's role as an individual expert. Toward that end, we can reframe the instructor's role.

Moving beyond a focus on individuals' pedagogy to one that facilitates the student's performance is a tremendous philosophical shift for some faculty. It requires a vision of cooperative learning that addresses and enhances participants' capacity to learn. It values all students' participation and not just those who look like traditional learners. The role of active learning is important for this change. "There is considerable research demonstrating that cooperative learning produces higher achievement, more positive relationships among students, and healthier psychological adjustment than do competitive or individualistic experiences." (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1991) These authors suggest that the traditional select and weed out approach must be replaced with a "development" approach.

Active learning embraces the range of techniques for improving student participation. Techniques include different methods of organizing and presenting information, establishing various methods and opportunities for students to read, think, analyze, and simulate theoretical material. (O'Neal, 1996)

Students seeking alternative education routes because of obstacles to traditional access require teachers who are sensitive to their lifelong learning and methods of learning. Contemporary approaches to engaging with diverse groups urge use of multidisciplinary knowledge and integrated paradigms that specifically include perspectives of minority researchers and cultural literature. (O'Neal, 1999) This content affirms diverse persons and provides illustrations and simulations relevant to their experiences. In this respect, demographics should be considered in designing teaching/learning modules as well as the characteristics of adult learners. The integration of materials from a broader set of researchers, writers, authors, scientists with various world views will help attract and enhance the performance of a wider range of learners because they can respond to strategies and information that demonstrates interest in their participation.

Job training programs in the U.S and Europe are developing to address the limitations of colleges and universities. Cross national research in this area is limited because of methodological constraints, but there is strong evidence that workplace based training has been "growing and broadening their programs since about 1980." (Livingston, 1999) In Japan, employees are receiving of the job training through their employers and new institutions have been developed to provide the training. (Livingston, 1999)

Adult educators can play roles in designing and implementing education and training in employer organizations, in alternative school sites, in public libraries as well as colleges and universities. The Internet, distance education and education in alternative sites that are created with active learning approaches show promise for helping teachers provide educational opportunities for adult learners who may be gifted low income students, older parents, immigrants and other students who have not been able to access educational with traditional resources. Because pedagogy has focused on the work of the teaching community, it has not addressed the total community. Faculty can develop creative partnerships to enrich the learning environments by considering the needs of diverse students and their life experiences and becoming more involved with the total community.

In this respect, challenges related to funding must also be addressed. Corporate sponsorships such as adopting classrooms or departments for special projects must be explored. Creative collaboration with private sector resources, governmental and voluntary agencies may be established to sponsor special institutes and workshops. Interdisciplinary mentoring programs may also be envisioned to prepare students for future goals.

Developing the curriculum: Structure and content

The learning environment should be comfortable, secure and focused on students learning how to learn and developing knowledge. The educator or learning facilitator should pay attention to the structure, content, presentation, student participation, and evaluation. Essentially, designing the curriculum requires listening to consumers description of how they learn and what they need; providing structure and content; and providing opportunities to measure their learning. These dimensions can be offered in ways that presents options for students.

The strategy for reaching adult learners involves organizing the learning environment and the content. in ways that establish a foundation for positive learning interactions for all students regardless of their perspectives. Learning facilitators may introduce multidisciplinary and multiethnic research to create assignments that assist students in using multi-source research .

The structure needs to solicit related perspectives and integrate those views with theoretical information. Factual information presented in a format that is visually attractive and encourages students to work with the information is rudimentary and preliminary to students' continuing work. Second, students must digest descriptive information then begin an analysis stage to incorporate the material in a way that emphasizes integration and synthesis more than memorization. In this way, educators assist more in facilitating the learning of others rather than employing old teaching styles that focus on "giving" students information to memorize. Learning facilitators may provide assignments for students to present examples from research online, in libraries, or from the community that incorporates the material. Examples of student applications may also be used in subsequent courses. In these ways students can be creative in demonstrating their ability to work with information.

Content and examples should reflect the potential diversity of the students. Examples that work for some students may offend or exclude other students. Materials with traditional and alternative perspectives are needed to be inclusive of historical and contemporary information and research. All information should be presented in a manner that embraces the broad context of the subject matter. In this way, instructors prepare a foundation to direct individual student learning needs.

Various ways of measuring performance should be employed. The early focus on technology and innovation is now shifting to accurate measurement of the impact of innovation on learning. Methods for measuring performance in conjunction with the use of multimedia and other electronic teaching devices are evolving. George and Sleeth present a study that described students positive responses to multimedia.(1996). Technology use was found to increase students learning, enjoyment and interest in the material. (Wise and Groom, 1996). However, they could not translate this satisfaction to better performance on tests or papers. More research is needed on types of technology associated with class size and student involvement and related measures of performance.(George and Sleeth, 1996)

In a project conducted in Europe the emphasis on learner support is acknowledged to be under-developed. Adult learners in general and particularly those with more limited educational backgrounds, required strategies to assist their progress, to enhance motivation and complete learning programs.(ATLASS, 1997)

Despite the continuing emphasis on student reactions to teaching styles and presentation format, the bottom line must address students proficiency with the information. (George and Sleeth, 1996) Teachers need continuing education that not only focuses on new technology but on its association with the learning needs and performance of the wide population of students, and on methodology to motivate and achieve higher levels of reasoning and synthesis.

Illustrations

The following examples demonstrate structure and content for diverse student populations.

Multimedia in an Economics Class

With the clear diversity of students in community colleges it provides an exciting arena in which to test materials suitable for a variety of types of students, young older and with diverse backgrounds and interests within the business group. Because many students do not read much, we have to teach them through the medium they are more comfortable with.

The potential diversity of a student population is evident in a sample of business students with whom we are currently working in a community college (O'Neal, 1999). The sample of 208 business students included about 13% who indicated immigrant status, 18.8% identified a native language other than English, and 6% indicated disabilities. ERIC notes that 65% of all public higher education students with disabilities were enrolled in community colleges in 1989. The following table lists the distribution.

35% - had learning disabilities
21% - orthopedic or mobility disabilities
16% - chronic illnesses or other
7% - hearing disorders
5% - visual impairments, emotional/behavioral disorders
4% - head injuries
2% - speech and language disorders
n=624 Source: ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, EDINFO Number 3

Although every community college class is not likely to have representatives of these types of groups, the mix in these classrooms urge teaching strategies that encourage and motivate many types of students. Above all, this type of classroom requires a mix of teaching strategies to assist students in succeeding.

The sample presentation was structured for a macro economics class. It includes an Archipelago module, a division of Harcourt Brace and company.) with graphics, animation and video clips used in combination with Microsoft Powerpoint' and other classroom exercises.

Student responses to this presentation have been very good. Not only have their verbal and written comments indicated their satisfaction with the presentations, but their individual and group projects have demonstrated that they understood the material.

Sample student presentations are available for review.

Because students are often reluctant to talk in traditionally taught classes, faculty observations(12+) of this classroom session resulted in comments regarding the lack of student participation in their classes compared with greater participation in these multimedia, multi- strategy courses.

E-mail assignment: Simulating policy discussions

Since the multimedia presentations offer predominantly visual cues for following information and working with it, the use of e-mail exchanges and list servers offers opportunities to submit points of view on subject related material. Assignments that present community scenarios and require students to present positions to advocate for and prepare to address the opposition urge their participation from different perspectives. Although other electronic devices may be perceived to be more interesting than e-mail, e-mail offers structured activity, supplemental supervision and consultation and a means of social interaction as well. (Gifford, 1998)

E-mail exchanges, chat rooms and newsgroup participation offer ways to locate information on topics. The discussions can provide points of reference for follow-up discussion in the classroom or in subsequent list server discussions. This discussion method also provides opportunities to list various beliefs and attitudes and demonstrate ability to listen to others, maintain self control, and ultimately to work with colleagues in problem solving situations.

Social work students are required to cover foundation data from the range of social sciences. It must be considered and analyzed with respect to policy development as well as applications for service delivery. A sample of a discussion group in a course on oppression and liberation is available for your review.

Summary

Open, active learning environments that incorporate a variety of teaching techniques address the learning needs of our communities. Multimedia, small group projects and exercises, case studies, and other techniques that generate student comfort in participating in the virtual or classroom setting are necessary to promote positive learning experiences. Teachers need to use at least three teaching strategies to accommodate the range of learner styles. A variety of performance measures are also needed to assist students in evaluating their knowledge, understanding, reasoning, synthesis and problem solving.

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Working with the Virtual Student

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The successful learner in the online environment needs to be active, creative, and engaged in the learning process. In other words, they need to be "noisy learners (Nipper, 1989)" or learners who are visibly engaged with one another and with the generation of knowledge. Some students who might not be "noisy learners" in the face-to-face classroom, can flourish online as they have the luxury of time for reflection and response, and do not have to compete with more extroverted students in order to be heard. However, the expectation that students will engage with one another in the learning process cannot be assumed, but must be taught. This paper explores the three major roles of the student in online learning: Knowledge generation; collaboration; and process management. In addition, we explore instructional techniques to facilitate the development of those roles.

Introduction

Colleges and universities today are in transition. Factors contributing to that transition are economic pressures from mounting costs, demands by the business world for graduates who are able to function in a knowledge society, and greater diversity among students who choose to go on for higher education. The response of many institutions to these changes is the development of online distance learning courses and programs. These courses and programs vary in the degree of interactivity afforded the learner from the creation of static websites to the inclusion of asynchronous and synchronous discussion. The more that instructors involve their students in the learning process online, however, the more likely that students will achieve a successful learning outcome. A 1999 study conducted by the American Association for History and Computing suggests that the most successful course outcomes are being seen in classes that are small and that combine face-to-face and online interaction, also known as web-enhanced classes.

As academic institutions rush headlong into online distance learning, an assumption is being made. It is assumed that if online courses and programs are offered, teachers will know how to teach in that environment and, more importantly, students will know how to engage with the material. Our experience both in teaching online courses and in consulting with faculty, faculty developers, and administrators across the United States is that the opposite is true. Not only do faculty need training and assistance in making the transition to the online environment, students also need to be taught how to learn online. Learning through the use of technology takes more than mastery of a software program or comfort with the hardware being used. It is the creation of an awareness of the impact that this form of learning has on the learning process itself, a process that involves the creation of a learning community through which the learning occurs.

As we consider that learning process, some questions emerge: What are the characteristics of the successful learner in the online environment? What do we need to consider in terms of the role of the learner? How do instructors facilitate online courses in order to maximize the potential of the online learner? And finally, how can instructors teach their students to effectively use the online environment for learning? We will explore each of these questions in this paper in an attempt to provide instructors with ideas and suggestions to assist them in working more effectively with the virtual student.

The Successful Learner in the Online Classroom

Some students take to the online classroom easily and successfully. For others, it is more of a struggle. A number of students feel that the online classroom more closely supports their learning style than does the face-to-face classroom. There are attributes that make a student successful online where they may not blossom in the face-to-face classroom.

Will the introverted student who does not participate in the face-to-face class, become a blossoming flower in the virtual classroom? Research conducted by one of the authors indicates that the chances are that an introverted person will become more successful online, with the absence of social pressures that exist in face-to-face situations. Conversely, an extroverted person may have more difficulty establishing their presence in an online environment, something that is easier for them to do face-to-face (Pratt, 1996).

Much of the research done on successful students in distance education programs suggests that students who are attracted to this form of education share certain characteristics including the fact that they are voluntarily seeking further education, are motivated, have higher expectations, and are more self-disciplined. They tend to be older than the average student and tend to possess a more serious attitude toward their courses. They are what most would consider to be non-traditional students. This does not and should not exclude traditional undergraduate students, however, particularly when we consider that few of today's students can be considered "traditional." It is estimated that only one-fourth of our undergraduate population are traditional 18 to 22 year olds who are attending school full-time and living on campus (Rose, 1999). The majority of our students are older, are working and thus need more flexible schedules, and are not necessarily looking for campus-based educational opportunities. Consequently, they bring with them a different set of assets and expectations into the learning process.

Nipper (1989) describes the successful learner in a computer-mediated environment as a "noisy learner," one who is active and creative in the learning process (p. 70). As the characteristics of the online learner suggest, in general distance education has been applied to and seen as most successful in the arena of adult education. However, more universities are utilizing this delivery method with all groups of students regardless of age or level of educational experience.

Should we expect that all students will succeed in this environment? Although a student who might not be successful in the face-to-face classroom may do well online, it is unrealistic to expect that all students will do well in this environment, just as all faculty will not be able to adapt their teaching styles to fit the medium. When a student does not do well online, as evidenced by lack of participation or poor participation, they should be given the option to return to the face-to-face classroom. This should not be considered a failure, but simply a poor fit.

In our experience, computer-mediated distance education can successfully draw out a student who would not be considered a "noisy learner" in the traditional classroom. It can provide an educational experience which helps to motivate a student who appears unmotivated in another setting, because they are quieter than their peers and less likely to enter into a discussion in the classroom. We are also discovering, however, that the interactive skills learned in the online environment are transferrable to the face-to-face setting. In other words, once a student is acknowledged for their contributions to the class, their thinking skills, and their ability to interact, they gain confidence in their ability and tend to use these newly discovered skills in other settings. A student recently enrolled in one author's online class makes this point by stating:

> I have found through the learning environment that I have somewhat changed personally and continue to develop another side of myself. Most explicitly, confidence continues to develop within. Also, because I am more of an introvert, I tend to be more direct with my staff and peers. Yet, as I communicate on_line, I don't have to worry and do find myself toning down at work. I am not as impulsive and I tend to think more before I speak.

The online classroom can provide an alternative that may be quite useful for some students. However, all students must not be forced into the online classroom as it is not effective for all.

The Role of the Learner in the Online Learning Process

One of the hallmarks of the online classroom, one which differentiates it from face-to-face learning, is the need for the student to take responsibility for their learning process. In so doing, students play various roles and take on various functions in that process. All of the roles are very much intertwined and interdependent. They are: *knowledge generation, collaboration, and process management*. We will now look at each of these individually.

• Knowledge Generation

The instructor in the online classroom serves only as a gentle guide in the educational process. What this implies, then, is that the "recipient" of that guidance, or the learner, has a responsibility to utilize that guidance in a meaningful way. In the online classroom, this means that the learner is responsible for actively seeking solutions to problems contained within the broad confines of the knowledge area being studied, and raising the level of those solutions to more complex levels of thinking and analysis. They are expected to view problems and questions from a number of perspectives, including the perspectives of the other learners involved in the process. They are also expected to question the assumptions presented by the instructor and those of the other students, as well their own assumptions and ideas, demonstrating the ability to think critically. In so doing, learners in the online classroom are generating the preferred learning outcomes for this type of course: the construction of new forms of knowledge and meaning. Additionally, by engaging in the learning process in this way, learners are learning about learning in addition to gaining research and critical thinking skills.

• Collaboration

Students in the online learning environment are not expected to undertake this process alone. The failing of many computer-mediated distance learning programs has been the inability or unwillingness to facilitate a collaborative learning process. A recent study conducted by the Sloan Center for Asynchronous Learning Environments at the University of Illinois (1998) suggests that courses in which material is simply placed on a website for students to access will not necessarily provide increased contact with professors and peers, or lead to better learning outcomes.

In this environment, students should be expected to work together to generate deeper levels of understanding and critical evaluation of the material under study. In the process of seeking out additional materials for this purpose, students should be expected to share the resources they are finding with the other members of the group. Frequently, students will find an interesting website, article, or book that they become excited about sharing with others. In fact, promoting this type of search and the reporting back to the group on the results can be an effective assignment. We frequently expect in our courses that students will generate a list of readings and resources. We will get them started with a few suggestions, but it is up to the group to seek out and post other materials of interest in order to enrich the learning process for all group members.

This medium is perfect for the facilitation of collaborative learning. In addition to meeting together at the course site, students with similar interests should be encouraged to "meet" in other ways and work together. They might exchange e-mail in order to further discuss a problem or to share information. They might also collaboratively prepare a report or paper to then share with the others in the group. They might use synchronous discussion, known as chat, to work together on an assignment or have a question and answer session with the instructor. Additionally, students should be guided and encouraged in their ability to give one another meaningful feedback on their work. That feedback needs to go beyond giving one another pats on the back for good work, but instead should comment substantively on the ideas presented. All of this assists in the development of the critical thinking skills necessary to effectively engage in the knowledge generation role described previously.

One of the advantages to working online over the Internet is that groups of students working together in a class do not need to isolate themselves. Another means by which collaboration can happen is by facilitating dialogue between learning communities. By this we mean that instructors who are teaching like courses either in the same or different universities can encourage and even facilitate discussion between the participants in those classes. One group might research and prepare a presentation for another group, the outcome being the enhanced learning of both groups. Instructors may even consider team teaching utilizing this approach. Just the ability to study online can stimulate interest in collaborative work. As students discover that they are able to connect, using the Internet, with other universities and learning communities, their interest in doing so while working in other course areas also increases. Instructors can promote this type of activity through creative assignments that promote communication with other groups.

- **Process Management**

The role of process manager is the one that most significantly sets this form of teaching and learning apart from the face-to-face classroom. As an active learner, students are expected to participate within minimal guidelines, interact and engage with one another, speak up if the course or discussion are moving in a direction that is uncomfortable for them in any way, and take responsibility for the formation of the online learning community.

The instructor's response shows the necessary willingness in this medium to leave behind the traditional power boundaries that exist between instructor and student, to resolve conflict, and move the learning process forward. This medium has been described as the great equalizer, essentially eliminating the boundaries that exist between cultures, genders, ages, and also eliminating power differences. Greg Kearsley, in his *Guide to Online Education,* suggests that the discussions that occur in this environment are as free of sociocultural bias as is possible. Faculty, then, must be able to relinquish their role of power within and over the educational process in order to allow the learners to take on their process management role. In fact, we frequently find that we learn as much from our students in an online course as our students might learn from us. Recently, in a workshop we were presenting, an instructor stated, "I'm an expert in my field. What could I possibly learn from an undergraduate student?" Our response to him was that we hoped he was not serious. As we construct and enter learning communities, we must be open to the promise that learning can and will emerge from multiple sources.

The ability, then, to remain flexible, open, and to relinquish control are characteristics that make not only for successful instructors in this medium, but for successful learners as well. We must all maintain an attitude of being in this together and a willingness to adapt and adjust as we move along in the process. The ability for students to speak out in this regard, without fear of repercussion, must be there. Faculty must be able to communicate that this is not only acceptable, but necessary in order for students to be able to take on the roles necessary to facilitate educational success in the online classroom.

Facilitation to Maximize the Potential of the Online Learner

The online classroom is a potentially powerful teaching and learning arena in which new practices and new relationships can make significant contributions to learning. In order to successfully navigate the power of this medium in education, faculty must be trained not only to use technology, but also to shift the ways in which they organize and deliver material. This shift can maximize the potential for learners to take charge of their own learning process and can facilitate the development of a sense of community among the learners.

The transition to the cyberspace classroom can be successfully achieved if attention is paid to several key areas. They are: Ensuring access to and familiarity with the technology in use; establishing guidelines and procedures which are relatively loose and free-flowing, and generated with significant input from participants; striving to achieve maximum participation and "buy-in" from the participants; promoting collaborative learning; and creating a triple loop in the learning process to enable participants to reflect on their learning. All of these practices significantly contribute to the development of an online learning community, and can maximize the learning potential of all involved.

- **The Use of Technology**

When courses are delivered through the use of technology, attention must be paid to how we use it in the design and delivery of online courses. In other words, the technology should be a vehicle for delivery only and should otherwise be transparent to the process. Students should be able to access the course site easily and successfully navigate it. The most visually appealing course, complete with audio, video, and chat is useless if a student is utilizing old hardware or is living in a remote area with limited Internet access. Consequently, the software used for course delivery should be functional, simple to operate for both faculty and students, and user-friendly, visually appealing, and easy to navigate.

- **Establishing Guidelines**

An important beginning to an online course is the presentation of clear guidelines for participation in the class as well as information for students about course expectations and procedures. Guidelines are generally presented along with the syllabus and a course outline as a means of creating some structure around the course. Students should be presented with ample opportunity to ask questions about the course structure and guidelines to minimize the risk of confusion.

Guidelines should not be too rigid and should contain room for discussion and negotiation. Some guidelines, such as how grades will be given or the minimum number of times per week students are expected to log on and post are non-negotiable. Others, such as assignment due dates, formation of small discussion groups, or increasing the number of posts per week may be open to discussion. "Imposed guidelines that are too rigid will constrain discussion, causing participants to worry about the nature of their posts rather than to simply post. (Palloff and Pratt, 1999, p.18" Consequently, establishing a balance between reasonable and too much structure within the guidelines takes practice and may vary from group to group. A course design and set of guidelines that seems to have been working well for an instructor in a given course may not be functional in a group that needs more or less structure. Consequently, the instructor needs to be flexible and be responsive to the needs of the group when possible.

It is useful to use the guidelines as a first discussion item in a class. This enables students to take responsibility for the way they will engage in the course and with one another, and serves to promote collaboration in the learning process.

- **Promoting Participation**

Participation guidelines in an online course are critical to its successful outcome. As online instructors, however, we cannot make the assumption that if we establish minimum participation guidelines of two posts per week, for example, that students will understand what that means. We must also include expectations about what it means to post to an online course discussion. "A post involves more than visiting the course site to check in and say hello. A post is considered to be a substantive contribution to the discussion wherein a student either comments on other posts or begins a new topic (Palloff and Pratt, p.100)."

In addition to being clear about expectations for participation, the following are some suggestions that we have found will enhance participation in an online course:

- ➤ Be clear about how much time the course will require of students to eliminate potential misunderstandings about course demands.
- ➤ As the instructor, be a model of good participation by logging on frequently and contributing to the discussion.
- ➤ Be willing to step in and set limits if participation wanes or if the conversation is headed in the wrong direction.
- ➤ Remember that there are people attached to the words on the screen. Be willing to contact students who are not participating and invite them in. Create a warm and

inviting atmosphere which promotes the development of a sense of community among the participants.

The incorporation of these suggestions into the development of an online course can assist in the promotion of collaborative learning, potentially contributing to stronger learning outcomes.

- **Promoting Collaboration**

Collaborative learning processes assist students to achieve deeper levels of knowledge generation through the creation of shared goals, shared exploration, and a shared process of meaning-making. Jonassen et al (1995), note that the outcome of collaborative learning processes includes personal meaning-making and the social construction of knowledge and meaning. Stephen Brookfield (1995), describes what he terms "new paradigm teachers" who are willing to engage in and facilitate collaborative processes by promoting initiative on the part of the learners, creativity, critical thinking, and dialogue.

Given the separation by time and distance of the learners from one another and from the instructor, and given the discussion-based nature of these courses, the online learning environment is the type of learning arena that, "(a) lets a group of students formulate a shared goal for their learning process, (b) allows the students to use personal motivating problems, (c) takes dialogue as the fundamental way of inquiry (Christiensen and Dirkink-Holmfield, 1995, p.1)."

Engagement in a collaborative learning process forms the foundation of a learning community. When collaboration is not encouraged, participation in the online course is generally low and may take the form of queries to the instructor, rather than dialogue and feedback.

- **Promoting Reflection**

When students are learning collaboratively, reflection on the learning process is inherent. Additionally, when students are learning collaboratively online, reflections on the contribution of technology to the learning process are almost inevitable. "The learning process, then, involves self-reflection on the knowledge acquired about the course, about how learning occurs electronically, about the technology itself, and about how the user has been transformed by their new-found relationships with the machine, the software, the learning process, and the other participants (Palloff and Pratt, p.62)."

The construction of a course that allows these naturally occurring processes to unfold greatly enhances the learning outcome and the process of community building. It is more than reflection on the meaning and importance of course material. The reflection process transforms a participant in an online course from a student to a reflective practitioner and hopefully sets in motion the potential for lifelong reflective learning. Purposeful facilitation of this process involves incorporating the following questions into a course:

- ➤ How were you as a learner before you came into this course?
- ➤ How have you changed?
- ➤ How do you anticipate this will effect your learning in the future?

(Palloff and Pratt, p.140)

The reflective process embedded in online learning is one of its hallmarks and most exciting features. If an instructor is willing to give up control of the learning process and truly act as a facilitator, he or she may be amazed at the depth of engagement with learning and the material that can occur as a result.

Teaching Students to Learn in the Online Environment

Making the transition to the online learning environment means developing new approaches to education and new skills in its delivery. It means engaging in self-reflection as instructors to determine our own comfort level in turning over control of the learning process to our students. It means promoting a sense of community among our students to enhance their learning process. But, most of all, it means abdicating our tried and true techniques that may have served us well in the face-to-face classroom in favor of experimentation with new techniques and assumptions. Consequently, we cannot make assumptions that as our methods of pedagogy change to suit the online classroom that students will automatically understand what we are attempting to accomplish.

The transition to online distance learning is bringing to the fore some new issues for administrators as they field concerns and even complaints from the students enrolled. Students enter an online course with the expectation that the course will be more attuned to their needs as learners. This may mean that the course is more convenient for them due to distance, or work and family demands. Or it may mean that do not like large classroom situations and prefer the potential for increased instructor/student interaction that is the promise of the online classroom.

However, students are, for the most part, unaware of the demands placed on them as learners by opting to learn online. They may enter a nontraditional approach to learning with traditional expectations, i.e., that the instructor will "teach" and they will "learn" from the material provided. They do not understand why the instructor is less visible in the learning process and that the instructor role is one of facilitator rather than traditional teacher. They do not understand that the learning process is less structured and demands significantly more input from the learners to make it successful. All of these issues must somehow be conveyed to students prior to embarking on an online course. As with face-to-face classes, instructors may encounter "difficult" students in the online classroom. Many times difficulties emerge when differing sets of expectations are held and no attempt is made to clarify.

Some institutions are, such as Penn State University, are creating online courses to teach students about online learning. Others are incorporating mandatory face-to-face orientations to online programs and courses. Regardless of the approach used, the idea is the same: ***we cannot assume that learners will automatically understand the new approach to teaching and learning that IS the online classroom.*** In order to maximize the educational potential the online classroom holds and to ensure that the learners therein are given the best chance of becoming "noisy learners," we must pay attention to teaching our teachers how to teach and our learners how to learn when teaching and learning are virtual.

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Ethical Issues in Academic Mentoring

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The adoption of learner centered philosophy and methodology in higher education raises new, more complex ethical issues for instructional personnel. This is particularly significant now because distance education delivery, especially as electronically mediated, is promoting the replacement of strictly didactic pedagogy with a mentored approach.

After offering working definitions for my key terms, I will look briefly at some traditional faculty codes of ethics, to highlight their inadequacy to provide guidance in the context of mentoring. I will then present several illustrative cases of common types of ethical issues, with and some discussion of the values issues embedded in them as part of my recommendation for an "untangling" process.

1. Definitions

- Learner centered education – the learner's academic objectives and needs are the primary focus of the educational transaction.
- Mentoring – individualized, one-to-one educational coaching and modeling
- Distance education – the learner and the teacher/mentor are rarely, if ever, in face-to-face contact. Communication often takes asynchronously.
- Ethical issues – problems of value conflict or transgression of accepted norms of behavior.

Traditional faculty codes of ethics typically address "teaching" and "scholarship" as distinct facets of faculty performance and behavior, and assume the classroom as the educational setting for the lecture or didactic mode of instruction. They offer a general framework of expectations or norms for faculty performance, but very little specific guidance for individual instances, especially in a changed and changing environment. Most of us were initially indoctrinated into the professorate through the models presented in our undergraduate and graduate schooling, before "distributed education," asynchronous communication and the egalitarian effect of 24 hour universal access to information. Many of the codes on the books reflect that older setting, and are based at least in part on the 1987 AAUP statement, from which I quote the section on teaching:

> As teachers, professors encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students. They hold before them the best scholarly and ethical standards of their discipline. Professors demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors. Professors make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and to ensure that their evaluations of students reflect each student's true merit. They respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student. They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They acknowledge significant academic or scholarly assistance from them. They protect their academic freedom. (AAUP 1987)

Note that this language expresses general expectations about standards of professional conduct, but no guidance about their application in individual instances. The codes which do spell out more particular requirements generally coach them in terms of the traditional situations. Two examples:

> Faculty encourage the free pursuit of learning by acknowledging our obligations:
>
> . . . To serve as intellectual guide and advisor.
>
> . . . Faculty recognize the obligation to encourage students' individual intellectual growth through discussion and study outside class hours.
>
> . . . Faculty should welcome students seeking advising in the faculty member's area of expertise. (Pierce College)

A. A faculty member must meet all assigned classes as scheduled, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Department Chair. A faculty member must

> also share the advisement responsibilities of the department, and hold office hours as scheduled. The primary criteria used in scheduling classes, office hours and advising should be based on serving the needs of the students.
>
> B. For each course, faculty will 1) provide a syllabus and adhere to it, 2) provide timely and relevant feedback to students on their performance, and 3) abide by existing campus policies, such as the campus calendar that provides for final examinations to be given during, not prior to, the sixteenth week of each semester.
>
> (California State University, Sacramento)

But how do we embody the principles of ethical behavior in situations where the mode of learning is active, the method is inquiry, and the simultaneous presence of instructor and learner in the same place at a fixed time is the exception, rather than the rule? I suggest that these conditions alter the rules of faculty behavior substantially, frequently making accustomed responses inadequate, inappropriate, irrelevant or counterproductive. This is particularly true when mentoring is the mode of relationship.

Jonathon N. Cummings and Thomas A. Finholt (1995) give this description of mentoring:

> (Mentoring is) the educator's pole of the teacher-learner relationship, when the model is learner-centered. It comprises coaching, tutoring and cognitive apprenticeship. . . . a mentor is defined as someone who has greater experience, and who has seniority in the world. . . the mentee is entering. The relationship between the mentor and the mentee is often characterized by the coaching, counseling, protecting, role modeling, sponsoring, and supporting that evolves from their personal interactions.

The exclusiveness and intimacy of this relationship indicated here as "personal interactions," imply even greater obligations on the part of the mentor than does the classroom situation. For example, the conversations which are intrinsic to mentoring are very likely to extend beyond the kind of exchanges which typically take place between a teacher and the members of a class. The limitations and potential pitfalls of such relations are summarized in a document of The University of Texas-Houston Health Science Center (1997):

> Like any other human relationship, the mentoring relationship can have both negative and positive consequences. The mentoring relationship will not be helpful if the mentor lacks the skills and insight to be helpful, is not interested in helping another person, or is inaccessible to the protege. The relationship may even have negative consequences if the mentor exploits the protege, uses the protege's work only for the mentor's own benefit, or takes credit for the protege's work. The relationship may also have negative consequences if the mentor is threatened by the success of the protege, undermines the confidence of the protege, has difficulty in allowing the protege to capitalize on the protege's unique interests and talents, or has difficulty in encouraging the protege to become more independent.

The principal factors which would have to be considered in developing new codes for faculty or updating the old ones would echo those relevant to traditional educational settings, but in the context of mentoring, they have a different resonance and meaning:

responsibility/reliability
intellectual authority and integrity
power and personal boundaries

Recognizing these factors is a way of recognizing that educational mentoring must be guided by more than a commitment to "Do no harm," because the expectation is that positive good will result from it.

I present the following scenarios as samples of the kinds of materials which could be used to help new faculty mentors become sensitive to the special requirements of their roles. I am drawing in part on my experience as a faculty member in a non-traditional, individually mentored graduate program which operates on a distance basis, as well as recent experience in online teaching of one of the staples of the undergraduate curriculum, introduction to philosophy. I recommend that the analysis follow this pattern:

1. Identify the issues and values involved

2. Identify the resources and strategies available for resolution
3. Assess possible outcomes in terms of educational objectives

(For each case here, I have specified some of the values issues which are implicit in it, but not the resources for possible resolution of the situation or outcomes, which would be largely continent on the particular program or setting.)

A. For a distance education course, the syllabus is designed in accordance with the written policy of the host institution: that the major portion of the "class" is to be conducted via an online, asynchronous conference. One final semester senior, however, announces via e-mail at the start that she is using a computer at work which has a "firewall" and finds that it will not allow her to access the conference. She asks for permission to submit assignments by e-mail; barring extraordinary efforts by the instructor, she would not be aware of any of the group conversation, nor could she participate in it. Should she be allowed to continue with the course?

Issues and values in the situation: What is the instructor/mentor's responsibility here? Does it include measures such as copying the group's conversation and forwarding them to this student, eliciting her responses and forwarding them to the group? Or is it adequate to point out that institutional requirements and expectations are clear with regard to the kind of connection a student must have to participate in the course?

Resources and strategies for resolution:
Possible outcomes in terms of educational objectives:

B. In a setting where the graduate student designs the work to be accomplished in the form of a study plan or contract focused on an inquiry, a new student presents his chosen subject area as "spirituality and mental health." He proposes to explore the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between evolution, spirituality and soul?
2. Does "soul knowing" impact psychological well-being?
3. What is the nature of personal essence or soul?
4. What does it mean to evolve?
5. Can consciousness direct personal evolution/ planetary evolution?

When encouraged to identify initial assumptions about the "spiritual" embedded in the questions, the student asserts that there are none. Further conversation elicits the statement that challenging the concept on philosophical or critical grounds is evidence of the instructor's personal bias. How can this study be moved forward?

Issues and values in the situation: The Webpage of the Online Ethics Center for Science and Engineering mentions the maintenance of "independence" as a goal of the mentoring relationship: "The mentor must not be in competition with the mentee; the mentee's intellectual independence from the mentor must be carefully preserved. " Human service professionals make a related point part of their codes of conduct, as for example the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" of the American Psychological Association: "In their work-related activities, psychologists respect the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own."

Although these standards are taken from somewhat different contexts, the concepts are certainly relevant to the mentoring of students by faculty. On the other hand, there are accepted canons of critical thinking and intellectual integrity which a student can be expected to apply in academic work, and introducing and interpreting them is an essential part of the mentor's work.

Resources and strategies for resolution:
Possible outcomes in terms of educational objectives:

C. An entering graduate student in counseling psychology identifies herself in admissions materials provided to the mentor as a recovering alcoholic. The mentor also has some family history of substance abuse, and notes that the student has a commitment to a particular therapeutic approach, which is proposed as a core element of the graduate study. The mentor herself is familiar with this approach, believes that it has been discredited and wishes to so advise the student. What are the mentor's professional obligations here?

Issues and values in the situation: The "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" of the American Psychological Association reads in part:

> Psychologists recognize that their personal problems and conflicts may interfere with their effectiveness. Accordingly, they refrain from undertaking an activity when they know or should know that their personal problems are likely to lead to harm to a patient, client, colleague, student, research participant, or other person to whom they may owe a professional or scientific obligation.

Is the mentor in this case disqualified from objective academic advisement and counseling by her own experience? Is she obliged to disclose her own experience or discuss the student's?

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Multicultural Perspectives in Academic Discourse: The Impact of Culture-Centered Context

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Creating an inclusive learning environment which is hospitable to diverse perspectives can encourage students to integrate their personal cultural experiences and knowledge into academic discourse and scholarship. As educators of adult learners, it is recognized that students bring a wealth of experiential learning into their academic environments. While nontraditional educational institutions have opened their doors to the prospect of credit by evaluation and independent study, there lacks evidence of these institutions direct connection to multicultural education and the various models which encourage transformation of standard disciplinary approaches in teaching. Morey and Kitano (1997) present a historical review of multicultural education within higher educational institutions. This review expands the content infusion model and suggest that curriculum reform calls for transformation in the ways of teaching, thinking and learning. James Banks has written extensively in the area of multicultural education; his writings suggest that at the highest level of course transformation students are empowered with knowledge which encourages decision making and social action. Ognibene (1989) speaks to the strengthening of the canon, adding significant events and people to traditional information and then challenging the canon with alternative definitions from diverse perspectives. Although the literature on multicultural course transformation is grounded in research on teaching approaches, there is little evidence of a student focus or a recognition that students can be the avenue to culturally relevant material within a study area. While there is some discussion of the practice of selecting content, material and resources that reflect the cultural characteristics and experiences of the students, there is a lack of discourse on how to access students personal cultural knowledge (Banks 1994) and its' application to academic and scholarly discussions. In related research, Pederson (1988) has proposed a model which integrates a learner centered approach that begins with the individual's experience then builds a knowledge base and enhances skills which call for the application of critical thinking and reflective analysis.

These models can be expanded to encourage knowledge construction from a personal cultural perspective and going beyond the mere inclusion of multicultural perspectives. This learner centered and culture focused approach can provide ownership to the learning experience by including the impact of culture centered context. Consider the experience of embedding cultural aspects of learning as students are asked to become more aware of cultural scripts. In a study of community organizations and basic helping skills, Ford, a student in his late forty's who is African American discusses the concept of disclosure and observes that mainstream Americans often feel uncomfortable with silence and tend to ramble in order to fill in quiet gaps. He indicates his discomfort with this pattern and during a review of the concept of confidentiality he engages in a long discussion on the meaning of silence. By directing this discussion into a consideration of his own values and his own interpretation of the process of disclosure, Ford is able to see where he is affected by his orientation to maintaining a more private stance in communicating with others. While Ford has every right to his own understanding of communication patterns, he begins to understand the need to encourage disclosure if he is to enter into the study of counseling theories and therapeutic helping professions. He cannot expect to develop skills in counseling concepts without engaging in disclosing conversations with the people he hopes to work with. At the same time, Ford's sensitivity to the need for private reflection and silence can be an added benefit during the counseling process. Facilitating personal cultural reflection supports Ford's critical consideration of both theories of psychology and the application of helping skills such as listening and reflection or paraphrasing. Beck, a student in her early 30's is of Jamaican decent and has been in the United States for approximately three years. Her previous educational experiences were in institutions which approach educational models with a highly authoritative, disciplined and rigorous attitude toward knowledge acquisition. She has entered into a guided independent learning institution which encourages critical thinking and reflective analysis. Her initial work shows her pattern of being rule directed, concrete and deferring to the instructors as the authority. In her study of Carl Rogers she has difficulty understanding the effectiveness of the non directive approach to counseling and helping relationships. Additionally, she comments that she questions both the effectiveness of this approach and her own capacity to function in a non directive model. While her reflection is extensive, she is possibly identifying what Brislin (1992) calls a culture clash which can signal conceptual misunderstanding. These examples of a learner centered approach to multicultural knowledge construction show the opportunity to direct students to make explicit their cultural context. In both cases, students are simply asked to consider concepts in regards to their own interpretations, belief systems and experiences. The inquiry into knowledge construction from the students culturally centered context is a powerful engagement for the student and the teacher. It encourages co-construction within the knowledge building experience and encourages the development of an inclusive learning environment. It models to students that knowledge and understanding is situated within the parameters of our own social and educational background. At the same time, it recognizes that as learners students bring a broad spectrum of experience; connecting this experience to the academic domain enables critical thinking and reflective analysis. Perhaps one of the side benefits of encouraging culturally centered context is the ability to witness that cultural learning is not unitary but rather dynamic. This knowledge construction process helps students to understand, investigate and determine how their implicit cultural assumptions influence the way in which concepts are understood (Banks, 1994).

Yet another tool for comprehension, analysis and synthesis is the use of guided written assignments. While raising questions within discussion helps students to consider their cultural context, written assignments may provide an opportunity for more reflective consideration. A student essay, on a culture clash and the unspoken assumptions and expectations that caused it to be a culture clash, offers an example of the application of cultural context. Marie is an adult student who works in a pharmaceutical company within their sales staff. She cites her experience in Asian based markets and discusses the incidents of cultural clashes in regards to collaborative and competitive societies. In regards to individual behaviors she identifies social psychology and sociological perspectives when engaging in work related activities. Within her essay she discussed the importance of knowing culture specific customs. An interesting and insightful essay. Marie takes the opportunity to reflect on these culture latent experiences and applies this knowledge and recall in order to understand socialization concepts and psychological drives. Whereas Marie's essay may give us ample material for recognizing the benefit of student focused culturally relevant material, it does lack explicit points regarding personal cultural impact on learning. Marie is outside of herself in her analysis of the Asian and U.S. native exchanges. It is possible that she has not reflected on her personal cultural experiences as an Anglo Saxon female, educated in traditional American schools and working in middle class America. To ask Marie to apply a personal consideration of her assumptions would be to create another level of evaluation regarding academic and scholarly material. A resource which encourages this level of consideration is the assignment of a guided autobiographical paper. This learner centered activity is best used in the early stages of a social science or behavioral science study. The assignment simply ask student to think about the intersection of social class, nationality, racial and ethnic heritage, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, geographic, historical and familial aspects of their upbringing. In consideration of these diversity dimensions, students are asked to reflect on the impact of these aspects of self on their personal development and on their learning or educational experience. This tool

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has been used by over 300 students engaged in multicultural studies. While it has clear application in the content area of anthropology, psychology and sociology, it also provides insight to students in regards to their learning process. One student discussed her racial identity's impact on classroom dynamics. She was in a predominantly white grammar school and felt that her learning environment enhanced her understanding of Western European history and yet she felt that this history was not part of her heritage. She reports that these early experience created within her an "outsider" perspective within her educational experience. Although she is now an adult, her segmented learning approach causes her to have trouble integrating knowledge with personal experiences. She "banks" information rather than engaging in synthesis or evaluation. Her written assignments tend to be concrete and factual rather than reflective and analytical.

Another student, Leo, speaks to his awareness of sexist thinking when he reads about corporate efforts to diversify work teams. In a study on organizational behavior, Leo challenges his own reaction to theories regarding women in the technical and construction trades. Leo is a 24 year old Italian male raised in a rural township. His interaction with diverse people is limited yet the assignment to consider how his personal cultural experiences influence his learning activities provided him an opportunity to engage in content integration, prejudice reduction and knowledge construction.

The ongoing research on personal cultural knowledge (Banks, 1994); its' impact on learning as well as its' application to course transformation (Morey and Kitano, 1997) deserves consideration within nontraditional independent study programs for adult learners. Recognizing the strategies for making explicit the presence of cultural context by simply asking for it through discussion and written assignments can encourage faculty to continue to integrate the learners experience from contextual and student centered perspectives. The guided autobiographical sketch provides a beginning bases for reconstructing meaning and enhancing collaborative learning experiences.

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Seeking Quality Citations and Unmasking the Imposter Sites

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Much is written in composition studies about the problem college writing instructors have introducing beginning writers to academic forms of prose and yet there is an analogous and intimately connected problem that gets very little attention outside of the library community – how to teach novice researchers to be discriminating users of information in the academic prose they are expected to create. For every forty or more class sessions in a semester course it is rare that more than one is used to acquaint students with the problems of interpreting published discourse. The fifty minute library session is usually the one opportunity the students have for research instruction and yet most of its time is consumed by the nuts and bolts of showing students where and how to find books and articles. Is it a wonder that students get the impression that research is a treasure hunt for the largest set of understandable "truisms?"

William G. Perry in his classic *Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme* talks about students who progress from the initial stage: a dualistic view of the truth, right or wrong, to another stage in which, truth being relative, then anyone has a right to his own opinion regardless of the evidence. This view is also encountered in beginning adult students of any age and is not just confined to the 18 to 22-year old age span. " If there are right answers then why aren't those just passed on through lectures? If there aren't right answers why isn't whatever information I collect as valid as any other?" It seems that these stages are sometimes even harder to get through for adult students who for years have been presented with a view of education as a commodity bought with time and money and something called "hard work." They have not been exposed to the concept of education as Freire describes it: as the means to "penetrate [reality] more and more lucidly in order to discover the true interrelations between the facts observed." (Bizzell 132)

For some the World Wide Web has become a comfortable way to seek information. So comfortable that many adult students are beginning to choose web sites over conventional reference materials which at the very least have the review of discriminating librarians. The Web, with all the incredible diversity of information it provides, exacerbates the problem that every student has to deal with – learning to distinguish more reliable, valid and academically respectable sources from schlock. Lois Stanford and D.W. Farmer both call the preference for convenience over quality a student consumer orientation. (39,109). In this paper we will distinguish this student-centered approach from one which emphasizes empowerment, active learning, and potentially transformative education. We will describe an experiment in developing critical WWW evaluation skills. This effort is a part of an adult interdisciplinary program that endeavors to integrate the skills and values of the information literacy movement with an effort to help students acquire an education that empowers them for a lifetime of learning.

We are particularly interested in students in a class entitled Research Methods and Proposal Development in which adult students in an interdisciplinary degree program are expected to create a research proposal with an annotated bibliography on a focused research topic for their upcoming senior project. Many adult students tend to prefer practical and applied research. Some other students have a preference for executive summaries of studies. Basic research articles can be ponderous and esoteric. Experienced readers learn to skim, skip about, evaluate, and extract crucial elements from journal articles. Serious students report that magazine-like surveys of a topic ultimately become repetitive, uninteresting, and do not contribute to the further understanding of their chosen topic.

Our purpose is to have these more developed students share their insights with other students so as to challenge the misconceptions of what valid academic research material really is.

Over a period of six years we have found that numerous problems persist which prevent students' development. There seem to be the dualistic level student who believes that being receptive is all that is called for and learning consists of absorbing accepted knowledge and the relativist who believes that active collection of some amorphous commodity called "information' is the nature of research. This particular exercise focuses on overcoming these two major problems: the uncritical use of WWW resources and the difficulty some students have in critically evaluating sources. On the first annotated bibliography assignment half of the students turn in uncritical annotations. Many student choose to research work related issues, but, hesitate to or do not understand the merits of identifying issues or seeking out rigorous research or best practice elsewhere.

Lois M. Stanford quotes Yeats as writing that education is "not the filling of a vessel but the lighting of a fire." (38) We encourage collegiality among students, active learning, critical thinking, and information literacy throughout their degree program.

Student collaboration can help prevent students from reverting to the conventional understanding of students as vessels. Perry emphasizes the fragility of student initiative and engagement in inquiry, "no sooner do the students get started, however, and some error or inexactness is voiced, than the older form of responsibilities imposes on the instructor the imperative of 'correcting.' In the hours where this tendency gets in motion, three to five corrections of this kind appear sufficient to defeat the students' initiative for search and the flow of their exploration." (211-212). Our approach is based more on collaborative learning techniques in which students work in groups to discover mutually acceptable standards for judging the quality of academic research. Putting students at the keyboard and mouse as the group judges resources emphasizes the importance of their judgement and initiative but also helps them recognize that as a community we are all struggling to learn the technology. We function as coaches.

Since the seventies librarians have moved their focus to how patrons actively use information. Their more traditional role mirrors the conventional professors' model of one that selects and orders information. (Kuhlthau, 1-5, Farmer) Farmer and Mech emphasize the importance of resource based learning in which students locate, evaluate synthesize organize and apply information. (124) The discipline of education and adult education has undergone a similar development beginning with Dewey and including Bruner, Perry, Cross, Freire, Giroux, Boyer, and Bellah. (Pence 101-102, Kuhlthau 189-194) Merriam and Caffarella provided a careful delineation of the differences between approaches which include critical theory, self-directed, active, and transformational learning. Drawing from this literature, Pence asserts that a transformed resource-based education uses knowledge "to connect rather than to dissect, the object is to interpret rather than to explain, and the task is to interrogate and render critical judgement rather than to analyze."(114)

We have tried a variety of techniques to teach students to select more rigorous pieces and to be critical of their sources. Students draw concept maps of their disciplines' basic texts, specialized encyclopedias and methods. They are required to submit several drafts of their annotated bibliographies as their proposal expands and becomes more focused. Students write separate analyses of the literature review and method sections of their best papers. Peer groups edit each of these assignments so students have an opportunity to see a range of treatments and approaches to analysis. The group work usually permits the student some sense of the merits of more rigorous academic work.

Despite all these assignments and individual meetings between the professor and students, some students have difficulty developing a critical spirit and the evaluation skills one would expect of a well-educated undergraduate. Many have overmuch faith in texts or little idea of the values and methods used to create the information summarized therein. The recent change to the semester system has increased students' experience with research papers and permitted more library time.

Part of the movement is documented in the edited book by Farmer and Mech and through the set of "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education" formulated by American Association of College and Research Libraries. For the sake of simplicity and rigor in our exercise we focused on Standard Three: The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system. Because of the political economy of the WWW Standard Five, which addresses the economic, legal, and social issues of the use of information, became an important issue. Access to technology is a constant underlying issue in our classes. Students needed to have a basic grasp of copyright law in order to understand what is missing from the Web. They were not required to pose questions, develop search strategies, or relate information to their own needs. We attempted to simplify the overall effort to focus on what appears to be most difficult task – the critical evaluation of sources.

Because of the common uncritical use of the World Wide Web, we resorted to a crucial element for Jerome Bruner's (1986, 46) notion of surprise:

> Surprise is a response to a violated presupposition. If what impinges on us conforms to expectancy, to the predicted state of the model, we may let our attention flag a little. ...Let input violate expectancy and the system in put on alert (Kuhlthau, 27).

This tension between boredom and anxiety is a source of emotional energy, which George Kelly suggests we exploit. (Kuhlthau) He suggests we recognize a more colloquial use of the word hypothesis. His invitational hypothesis is a mood that helps one deal with inconsistency, uncertainty, and confusion by allowing us to suppose facts to be known and construct a strategy for coping or a broader perspective (19-23).

We suspected that careful comparisons of different web sites covering the same topic would help students construct a perspective from which to critically evaluate information. Our previous frustration also led us to develop a curious sense of humor. We asked students to review a series of web pages to encourage critical thinking about sources of information. Ms. Sauer developed a page to help students evaluate web sites. http://www.usouthal.edu/sauer/evaluat.html. Students worked in groups. The least computer literate did the browsing. Others were technical advisors, recorders, and presenters of findings. The groups appeared to provide opportunities for the students to learn from each other's strengths. We ordered two sets of five web sites according to how cleverly the authors camouflaged their biases and weak or downright false information. Each set contains three sites containing information on one topic, immigration and cloning respectively. For instance, we encouraged some hesitancy about accepting that which is written on the web by asking student to compare the views of a Pat Buchanan organization, with the U.S. Immigration Service, and the Friends Service Committee. http://www.usouthal.edu/sauer/ais380.html. Students recognize that no one of these authorities has the truth and that they present their view with various degrees of integrity. Some readers will be familiar with the *Review of Improbable Research* from which we drew the parody of an academic journal article, "Feline Reactions to Bearded Men," which has a scholarly appearance as it contains all the standard elements of a scholarly article: http://www.improb.com/airchives/cat.html. As students moved from more preposterous imposter sites to the more sophisticated, they had an opportunity to develop their ability to identify suspicious claims and weak presentations of information. When they reported their findings, teams appeared to have developed some minimum sense of community. Their finding complemented those of other groups who evaluated the same sites. The literature on resource-based learning suggests that we academicians may likewise overcome our "invidiously hierarchical sets of structures, values, principles, beliefs, and feelings" to form more connected learning communities (Elizabeth Minnich and National Institute of Education quoted in Pence, 114,115).

Our surprise at the extreme confidence in the WWW as a source of both all information and good information displayed by a research methods and proposal development class of juniors led us to use a pre- and post-test with a second class. Fifty-five percent of students polled in a class of students beginning our adult degree program believed that with a good search you could locate any information. The class of juniors would not deny this proposition. This junior class also agreed with nearly half of the beginning class that all information in the Library of Congress was available on the Web. In a post-test administered five weeks later all twenty-one students correctly rejected the availability of all truth on the Web, only three continued to assert that all of the Library of Congress was a mouse click away. These students may have been among the four students who missed the library class. Students remembered that an author's copyright interest would likely keep him or her from publishing information on the Web. Two students thought that the Web would render libraries obsolete in the post-test, while one predicted the demise of the library in the pre-test.

We asked the beginning class to comment on what they learned immediately after the library instruction and the exercise which involved evaluating WWW pages. Five weeks later when the post-test was administered, students were asked how the exercises changed their understanding.

The comments gave us some encouragement about the effectiveness of our approach. Five of the twenty-one students noted their uncertainty about a new library without a card catalog. Immediately after the instruction the most common response was that the computer based catalog (2 pre-, 2 post-) and especially the databases of serials (6 pre-) were convenient. Students also noted that library instruction, available librarians, combined searches and access from home as valuable. The WWW will not replace the academic library (3 post-). After five weeks five student admitted previously thinking everything was on the Web. The strongest lesson students learned was to evaluate the quality of information (4,5) especially that on the Web (3,9). Comments included suggestions about how to evaluate a source by seeking corroborating sources, examining the authors' credentials, and using addresses.

One outcome which has resulted from our overall effort to incorporate information literacy throughout our adult students interdisciplinary degree is that many have returned to say how much easier and faster their searches for quality materials have become. (Porter, 51) We hope to share this insight more broadly.

In the future we will spend five hours of class time helping students develop their information literacy skills. While we did receive one letter of protest about our use of parody sites, the apparent rewards of being engaged as groups to uncover the larks justify a few assaults on our apparent seriousness. Despite the multiplicity of approaches to academic rigor, it may be worth our while to post a few model papers to help students understand how the writers of a serious paper painstaking present their reviews of literature and methods. Our work has made clear to us the persistent narrowness of some technicians, managers, consumers, and disciplines. The parallels among writers in adult education and library sciences merit further collaborative efforts.

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Community Connections: Citizen Forums for Democracy in the New Millennium

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What happens when a well-established, prestigious national community education program goes digital? That is what happened when National Issues Forums (NIF) and the Kettering Foundation enhanced their community discussion forums with distance education technology. Wheeling Jesuit University with its NASA initiatives provided tools and expertise to help NIF and Kettering bridge distance barriers by linking multiple communities in a simultaneous discussion via videoconference technology. The program was also streamed live to the World Wide Web with internet participants contributing via e-mail.

This teleconference project, which also included The University of Charleston, experimented with positive uses of technology by coupling it with deliberative dialogue. The technology enabled people from several regions to deliberate simultaneously. Research questions this project sought to answer included, "Can technology be used to enhance public deliberation?" and "What additional attributes can technology provide in creating a regional (or national) conversation?"

A practical "lessons learned" perspective will outline the development of this project as a model of good technology planning to enhance and expand existing adult education programs with appropriate tools. A "mini-forum" will be conducted giving participants direct, hands-on experience with the NIF process and a clear sense of the importance of human interaction in deliberated discussions.

If necessity is the "mother of invention," it must also be the "mother of partnership" as well. Certainly, needs and resources matched up very nicely as a unique partnership emerged between a prestigious national community education program (the National Issues Forum), a research foundation (the Kettering Foundation) and a small Catholic University in West Virginia (Wheeling Jesuit University). This partnership combined resources to develop a new platform for community deliberated discussions using appropriate technology to enhance a well established product without compromising quality of the experience for the end user.

WJUís Office of Continuing Education coordinated resources from the Universityís NASA projects, the Center for Applied Ethics and the Office of Distance Learning to organize a forum linking citizens from Charleston, WV; Dayton, Ohio; and Wheeling, WV. Various technical and human challenges emerged throughout the entire planning process including choosing the most appropriate technology and compatibility issues. Throughout the process, effective communication between the various site coordinators and other stakeholders was crucial.

The Partners – An Introduction

National Issues Forums

Since 1982, National Issues Forums (NIF), a voluntary, nonpartisan nationwide network of over 5000 institutions and organizations has fostered public deliberation about important social issues by gathering together everyday citizens to deliberate about some issue facing their community. NIF sponsors thousands of forums in which participants deliberate with one another, eye-to-eye, face-to-face, exploring options, weighing othersí views, and considering the costs and consequences of public policy decisions. The programs help adults develop as learners through a collaborative learning experience in which participants share individual views with one another and are usually organized in a local setting. The focus is always on moderated deliberation, not debate: with the point of the interaction to help participants understand one anotheris differing viewpoints rather than to convince one another of the correctness of a particular position.

The Kettering Foundation

The Kettering Foundation, was established in 1927, and is an operating foundation rooted in the American tradition of inventive research. Its founder, Charles F. Kettering, held more than 200 patents and is best known for inventing the automotive electric self-starter. The Foundation today continues the tradition of "tinkering"by taking on big problems in all their complexities, developing new ideas, and producing guides people can use to solve problems. Its research emphasis has shifted over the years from mechanical bodies to political ones. Today, Kettering is working on strategies for strengthening American democracy. The primary question addressed by our research is "What does it take to make democracy work as it should?"As many thoughtful observers have pointed out, our political system, like all other political systems, has to change in order to meet the challenges of a new century. So Kettering is trying to identify those challenges.

One of the greatest challenges Kettering has identified and thus researches is the disconnect between the public and its institutions. In a recent study on American civic renewal by the Harwood Group, Inc., the disconnect of citizens from society was documented. Without a vibrant civil society, and the many institutions as principal players in it, public life is in jeopardy. One of the various factors responsible for this disconnect is technology. Technology is often seen as an isolating factor within society and there is a very real growing concern that people are becoming more connected to their machines than to other people. It is imperative that we begin to search out positive, community building uses for technology.

Deliberative dialogue has long been another research interest of the Foundation. It can be simply defined as people coming together to talk about a community problem that is important to them. With their interest in deliberative dialogue, the Kettering Foundation has a long-standing research relationship with NIF.

Wheeling Jesuit University

Founded in 1954, Wheeling Jesuit University is the only Catholic institution of higher education in the State of West Virginia. The Universityis mission statement makes clear the institutionis commitment to serving its community and region by making a private liberal arts education available, affordable and accessible for people from the Ohio Valley, West Virginia and all of Appalachia. In its teaching, WJU is committed the ideal of "educating men and women for others"in the Ignatian and Catholic traditions.

Over the past decade, WJU has experienced tremendous growth thanks mainly to new federal initiatives, primarily with NASA. The University is the only institution in the nation to house all three of NASAis educational initiatives: an Educator Resource Center; a Challenger Learning Center (simulated space flights); and the Classroom of the Future (NASAis primary research facility for science, math and technology K-12 education). The University is also home to NASAis National Technology Transfer Center, the national hub for a network of regional technology transfer centers around the country and the worldis largest repository of government and private laboratory research and patent information.

Beginning in 1989, these federal initiatives not only generated additional revenue and facilities, it greatly increased WJUis technological capabilities. In fact, WJU was the first private organization in the world to own and maintain an total ATM network. This wealth of technological resources made the University a perfect final partner to explore distance communication enhancements for NIF programs.

Project Background

As mentioned earlier, the Kettering Foundation conducts research for NIF, and the two organizations also had a solid relationship with philosophy professor, Dr. Thomas Michaud, and his Center for Applied Ethics at WJU. Kettering and NIF were interested in determining whether or not the traditional forums could be enhanced and/or expanded with technology. Since forums depend upon personal interaction, this was risky. Being aware of WJUis numerous NASA initiatives and extensive technological resources, Kettering convened a roundtable discussion there on October 1 and 2 of 1998.

The Discussion Panel

The participants in this roundtable included leading technology experts, people from the NIF network, including representatives from national and state Humanities Councils, and representatives from Kettering and WJU. A roster of participants is included in the Appendix. Using as background the *Whitman Study* of the current status and civic potential of the internet; Charles Whiteis article, "Civic Participation on the Internet;"and several articles by Langdon Winner including "Artifact: Ideas and Political Culture,"Dr. Michaud convened the roundtable with the following overview of the topic and questions to be explored.

> Our seminar topic is one that is of particular interest to the Kettering Foundation as the Foundation has been heavily involved in supporting public deliberation as essential to the democratic process. Kettering's work with the National Issues Forums is but one project connected with its focus on deliberative democracy.
>
> Distance communications technologies are virtually commonplace today in business corporations and government offices. However, could such technologies be used fruitfully in public deliberation which would foster the democratic process?
>
> This question engenders a number of other related questions:
>
> 1. What sorts of communications technologies might be "appropriate" for enhancing public deliberation?
> 2. Are certain deliberative topics more amenable than others to the employment of various communications technologies?
> 3. Should the use of the communications technologies be integral to the topic of a public deliberation forum? (e.g. topics that involve geographical regional disputes (like the "air quality"dispute between northeastern and mid-Atlantic states); or, topics which involve regional similarities in dealing with a particular issue (like immigration in Texas, Florida and other states).
> 4. If one grants that technologies are not neutral but have "valences," tendencies to influence individual and/or social behavior in certain ways, then what might be the positive or negative valence- influences of communications technologies on deliberative forums and public deliberation in general.

The panel discussed various aspects of technologyis impact on cultural dialogue, the political system, empowerment, civic life, politics and other elements of the American democratic system. The point was to try to find ways in which technology could be used to enhance community discussions and the democratic system rather than to isolate people in their own individual worlds.

Recommendation for an Experiment

The panel recommended an experimental forum linking multiple community sites in a single deliberated discussion: a technologically enhanced NIF that would allow people in multiple communities to deliberate about an issue with people from their own community as well as others from different communities. While the panel did not make any specific recommendations for exactly how this should be accomplished or which technologies should be employed, they did provide Kettering and NIF with some basic and important guidelines:

Antecedent Principles

1. No models which translate into formulas
2. The technology remains a means not an end
3. Moderator roles may change based on the technology employed
4. Consider medium most accessible my all – television
5. Must include time for reflection – "soak time"
6. Must provide broad-based information about opportunities to participate
7. Must identify and recognize limits and potential problems
8. Should use common language
9. Must avoid over-commercialization by preserving space for democratic participation – with dedicated system of protection.
10. Should explore how to take advantage of commercial aspects of reaching a larger audience

Appropriate Topics Matched with Appropriate Technology

1. The technology should be integral to the topic/situation
2. Do not choose abstract issues
3. Privacy on the Internet – topic appropriate to the Internet
4. Topics should be targeted to local populations
5. Topics that challenge people to see their place in the larger systems
6. Geographically dispersed common issues, such as environmental issues and crime issues
7. Look at local perspectives of national issues
8. Allow for open forums of wide range of participant chosen issues

Group Selection

1. A pre-established community of some sort with some investment in the topic – level of trust and familiarity important.
2. Social diversity actively encouraged
3. Equipment and technology access problems must be considered and addressed
4. Tap into existing groups who invite their members
5. Size must be considered – not too large to limit effective participation
6. Perhaps subdivide into manageable groups with moderators
7. Transnational and transprofessional components

Advance Preparation Considerations

1. Polling (through net) potential participants
2. Participants must be properly educated before participation begins (possibly provide information about issues on the Internet for advance review)
3. Enabling and identifying Internet access
4. Well-trained moderators play a crucial role that may need to change to accommodate different technologies
5. Moderators need technological training and experience as well as moderation training and experience
6. Teams (moderators, recorders, technicians) available at all sites
7. Deliberation skills must be articulated at outset – clear expectations of participants outlined early
8. Be cautious of overwhelming prerequisites
9. Plan for easy access
10. Prepare to deal with failure – maintain spirit of experimentation
11. Keep it as simple as possible
12. Sequence real-life and technological forums

Techniques

1. Carefully choose technology to be employed
2. "Hot"links during and after forum for further information
3. Keep it simple
4. Allow for mixture (integration) of techniques: face-to-face with technologies as appropriate
5. Carefully consider design – easy logistics, attractive, user-friendly, multi-sensory
6. Integration of personalization techniques – icebreakers, space for humor, etc.
7. Consider ways to make video technology multi-screen – see more of each other.
8. Provide accurate information regarding access instructions

Follow-up.

1. Consider means to evaluate
2. Analyze the dynamics of interaction

The week after the conclusion of the panel discussion, WJUis Director of Distance Learning, Cindy Bonfini-Hotlosz (who also served on the panel) set up a web page on WJUis server to disseminate information about the panelis work and to continue discussion.

An Idea is Generated

Before the roundtable was convened, Eddie Swain, WJUis Director of Continuing Education and a member of the roundtable discussion group, had approached Michaud to inquire about the possibility of holding an NIF forum on WJUis Campus as part of Wheelingis Martin Luther King Day Community Celebration which is annually hosted by the University. Dr. Michaud had agreed to begin planning this event with the Universityis Office of Continuing Education.

At the conclusion of the roundtable discussion, Swain, Michaud and Bonfini, approached Betty Knighton of the WV Center for Civic Life and a member of the NIF Board of Directors to explore topics for the Wheeling MLK Day Celebration. Knighton informed the WJU group that a new discussion guide was being developed for use in the National Issues Forums network on "race relations" and that a draft of it would be ready in time for the Celebration. At this point, all four people realized that this forum might be a perfect opportunity for the experiment that the panel had recommended since it was already being planned at WJU with that institutionis extensive technological resources.

The WJU officials then contacted some of the various officials of the NASA projects on campus to discern costs, facilities, capabilities, and other details. Using the roundtable panel recommendations as a rationale, Michaud submitted a prospectus to the Kettering Foundation in November of 1998 requesting $8000 to cover costs anticipated for the first attempted simultaneous National Issues Forum in multiple communities. The coordinating site would be Wheeling, West Virginia (hosted by WJU) with remote sites at Athens, Georgia (hosted by the University of Georgia); Charleston, West Virginia (hosted by the University of Charleston) and Dayton, Ohio (hosted by the Kettering Foundation).

Planning for the Experimental Forum

The project was planned as a "video"forum utilizing videoconferencing technology to link the four communities via videoconference technology that would provide real time "face-to-face"communication between the participants in the various communities. The event would also be streamed live to the World Wide Web with links enabling Internet participants to send comments and questions via e-mail. Such a project required extensive communication and cooperation from all stakeholders.

The prospectus proposed that the Kettering Foundation would provide the necessary financial resources and coordinate the evaluation process afterward. NIF would provide materials and moderators. WJU would provide logistical and technical coordination and resources and serve as the overall fiscal and marketing agent for the project. Each of the remote sites would secure moderators, participants, facilities and technical assistance that were to be financed through funds supplied by the Kettering grant to WJU.

At WJU, numerous internal partnerships were also being formed. The Office of Continuing Education provided logistical and financial coordination and maintained communications between the University and the various external partners (including the Wheeling Martin Luther King Day Community Celebration Planning Committee). Continuing Education also marketed the program locally to attract participants to the Wheeling "live"forum as well as nationally via electronic media to attract participants via the World Wide Web. The Office of Distance Learning coordinated the technical services from the University and the various NASA project departments. Additionally, the Center for Applied Ethics provided content expertise and recruited some of the local forum participants. The National Technology Transfer Center designed the web page and the Classroom of the Future provided the videoconferencing facilities, equipment and production personnel.

Human Communication to Solve Technical Problems

Even though technology was a prime focus of this project, it was obvious from the outset that human relationships would be important. The stakeholders were committed to maintaining personal interaction for the participants even though they would be removed from each other and joined in only a "virtual"sense. What was not as obvious was the need for human interaction in the planning phase of this project. Early on, technological questions created some confusion and uncertainty.

Compatibility

Some of the first and most serious questions had to do with compatibility issues. While WJU possesses state-of-the-art technology, these tools are useless for long distance communication if the receiving tools are not at the same level. In December of 1998, Swain and Bonfini traveled to Kettering, Ohio to meet with Kettering officials and assess the technical capabilities of that site. Once several planners understood the compatibility issues, they determined to set up the project based on the "lowest common denominator."That is, they would decide which site had the least advanced technology and scale the other sites down to that level. Also, a bridge service would be used to further enable compatibility.

New Concerns for Participant Interaction

During those face-to-face discussions plans were also drawn out for room design so that the multiple sites could mimic a single room from the participants' perspective. Camera placement and angles were set. Planners also discussed moderator methodologies that would need to be employed to accommodate the awkwardness of technologically enhanced communication.

The Wheeling site was using this event as part of the Martin Luther King Day Community Celebration. The original plans called for the Wheeling site to have a forum of as many as 75 participants, which is not unusual for a single site NIF. However, as planning progressed, the moderators became concerned that this large group would be too difficult to manage given all of the technological innovations being implemented. Therefore, WJU agreed to select a smaller group of 15 people to participate in the forum and broadcast the event to an auditorium where people could watch it and submit comments through a moderator equipped with a two-way microphone connected to the WWW moderator.

Changing Moderator Roles

It was decided that the Wheeling moderator, Michaud, would serve as the prime moderator. He would not only moderate the Wheeling group, but would also portion "air time"for all four groups preventing people from talking at the same time. Microphones would be set for "push-to-talk"so that a speaker could not be interrupted by another participant at another site.

The planners also decided that the "pre-forum"education phase of the NIF would be done offline. This would allow each community group to familiarize themselves with the issues and each other in an ordinary setting. It also allowed each siteis moderator to explain in more detail how the multi-site forum would be handled so that confusion could be minimized during the online event. The web page for the event would be placed online early with links to copies of the forum issues articles so that WWW participants could read them in advance. A separate moderator would be in place in Wheeling to gather questions and comments from WWW participants and feed them to Michaud who would relay them to the group.

Additional Planning Necessary

The planners also decided to schedule a telephone conference call for all site coordinators in early January to finalize plans and answer last minute questions. That conference call produced a recommendation for a "dress rehearsal"which would test the compatibility of the technology and also allow the experienced traditional moderators an opportunity to practice their new technology skills.

The major problem that occurred in the "dress rehearsal"was that the University of Georgia could not participate. Previous two-way tests of the technology had been successful, but on the day of the dress rehearsal, it was discovered that the Athens site simply was not compatible with the multi-site videoconference. At this point, the University of Georgia was forced to withdraw from the forum, and chose to hold a single site forum instead. Otherwise, the "dress rehearsal"went very smoothly. It was obvious that the moderators appreciated the opportunity to work within the confines of the new technology before exposing participants to the project.

A New Format Finally Takes Shape

The actual forum was definitely not as "user friendly"as the planners had hoped. There were several problems with the telephone system shutting out the audio portion for the Charleston site, and once, the entire videoconference shut down altogether. One of the problems that occurred was that some sites had participant microphones that had to be turned on and then manually turned off. This meant that if a participant "pushed-to-talk,"and then forgot to manually turn the microphone off, he or she would have effectively shut out all other participants from the other sites. The sites with microphones that automatically disconnected when the participant released his or her finger from the "on"button did not cause such problems.

However, some interesting lessons were learned. Participants were keenly interested in the issue and maintained a high degree of engagement despite some fairly distracting moments. Communication between sites added a whole new dimension to the forum. Comments made in Wheeling were expounded in Charleston and disputed in Dayton or vice-versa. At one point, comments made at the auditorium site in Wheeling were discussed at a deeper level in the Wheeling forum and then reiterated at a still deeper level in Dayton and Charleston. The additional perspective that geography can lend to a conversation was easily perceived.

Evaluation

The day after the project, the moderators and other planners met via telephone conference call and offered the following observations and recommendations for future multi-site forums.

1. Ground rules and technological procedures must be explained clearly at the outset.
2. Working with multiple sites opens up possibilities for additional technical problems and increases the challenge for moderating. Future experiments should be conducted

with only two sites. (This next experiment occurred in March between Wheeling and Dayton with much more success.)

3. The skills of moderating such a forum require a concentrated effort to pull all sites together, including such techniques as referring to participants at other sites by name and by referring back to previous points to build a cohesive development for deliberation.
4. The central moderator must consistently and systematically ask for input from the other sites.
5. Most of the technical "glitches"occurred because the project used an open, commercial system rather than a closed system with dedicated telephone lines. Future experiments may need to be conducted within a system with established telephone links.
6. Perhaps a single moderator could more easily establish connectedness among the participants at the various sites.
7. Use highly visible nametags for the participants.
8. Conduct workshops on moderating multi-site deliberations with overviews of the technology involved to better prepare moderators for the challenges that they will face.

Conclusion

Most people, including educators, often think that the technology revolution suddenly makes all things possible. This experiment has shown that this tenet is only somewhat true. Certainly, interpersonal communication and even formal deliberation can be accomplished with the use of technology. More experimentation is necessary to determine for certain whether or not that type of communication can be enhanced through technology, but the prospects are probably quite bright. Most importantly, this project highlights the need for intensive planning, cooperation and partnership in order to most effectively choose and utilize the most appropriate technology for any given job. It is not possible to simply throw technology at a problem and expect positive results.

Appendix

Roundtable Participants, October 1 and 2, 1999, Wheeling Jesuit University

Dr. Thomas Anderson, Philosophy Department, Marquette University
Cindy Bonfini-Hotlosz, Dir. of Distance Learning, Wheeling Jesuit University
Dr. Paul DeVore, Professor Emeritus, Technology Educ., WV University
Dr. Margaret Holt, Department of Adult Education, University of Georgia
Betty Knighton, WV Center for Civic Life and NIF Board of Directors
Esther Mackintosh, Vice President, Federation of State Humanities Councils
Dr. Thomas Michaud, Philosophy Department, Wheeling Jesuit University
Dr. Teresa Reed, Philosophy Department, Rockhurst College
Dr. Estus Smith, Vice President, Kettering Foundation
Edgar Swain, Director of Continuing Education, Wheeling Jesuit University
Dr. Langdon Winner, Technology Studies, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Debi Witte, Program Manager, Kettering Foundation

Frankenstein's Offspring: Teaching with Technology

Danney Ursery, St. Edward's University

> *Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but am rather the fallen angel,*
> *whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Make me happy, and I shall be virtuous.*
> *The Monster,* Frankenstein, *Mary Shelly*

The University is evolving and Higher Education is in transition. This transition is illustrated best in the rising number of nontraditional students, often defined by age and full-time employment, and the rapid increase in the uses of technology and how these two factors are changing the face of academics. It is estimated that only about 25% of the students on college campuses today are between the ages of 18 and 22 and are attending full-time (Twigg, 24), therefore, the vast majority of our student body in the United States are working, either full- or part-time and thus their work often hinders them from attending classes on campus.

Many universities are responding to these changes by offering accelerated classes, correspondence type courses, and use of the Internet. As technology comes into greater use, faculty and students alike are struggling with the changes it brings to the educational environment. Courses and degree programs are offered over the Internet and even Virtual universities are being created. Whether we end up like Mary Shelly's literary creation, an artificially created being, Frankenstein, who ran amok in 19th Europe, or whether we are able to tame the monster, I think the decision lies with those of us in the teaching trenches. As educators we have the opportunity to work with technology and to create a pedagogically sound and an academically rigorous educational environment. The Modernist view of education, characterized by chalk and blackboards, is slowly giving away to a Postmodernist understanding which is characterized by bits and bytes. Different forms of educational software have been created to assist in these new modes of digital delivery, computer-assisted training, synchronous discussion, or chat, and asynchronous discussion. All these instructional modes require a transition from campus classroom to cyberspace classroom. It is not enough for educators to simply take what we did in the campus classroom, a modernist environment, and attempt to translate it directly to the cyberspace classroom. What is required are new ways of learning and new ways of thinking about how the educational process should evolve. We must resist the inclination to see technology and the adult student population as a way to stabilize or increase enrollment or to increase profits for the university. As we move from the modernist stance to postmodernism, the goal of higher education must continue to be to achieve a high level of content and performance standards, which point in the direction of a new trivium.

Collins and Berge (url) categorize the various tasks and roles demanded of the on-line instructor into four general areas: pedagogical, technical, social, and managerial and while my presentation cannot cover each one in detail, I will demonstrate some strategies for creating web-based on-line instruction within the context of these four areas. In specific, I will discuss how I use asynchronous discussion forums, the use of weekly discussion questions and student class leaders, Real Audio lectures, study guides, and the many other aspects which make up the web learning environment. I will also briefly give an account of my unsuccessful foray into streaming video as well as problems with testing procedures and collaborative learning.

Chickering and Ehrmann (url) suggest that while using technology to teach, educators should shy away materials that are didactic and instead search for technology-assisted solutions that are interactive, problem oriented, and that evokes student motivation. According to Palloff and Pratt, the "key to the learning process are the interactions among students themselves, the interactions between faculty and students, and the collaboration in learning that results from these interactions" (Palloff, 5). Development of an on-line educational environment is not an easy task. Wiesenberg and Hutton identified three major challenges for the professor/designer: increased time for delivery of the course, creating an on-line community, and encouraging students to become independent learners. How we as teachers deal with these challenges will largely reflect how successful we are as teachers as we move into the evolving forms of education. Many of us cannot offer increased time for course delivery, but we can, and must, create an educational environment where in-depth learning and reflective thought are foremost.

Learning from a distance must be active. If students do not enter into the online classroom, do not post contributions to the discussions, the instructor has no way of knowing they have been "in-class." Students are thus not only responsible for logging on, they must also contribute to the learning process by posting their thoughts and ideas and by responding to others in the class. In each of my discussion forums, I require at least two meaningful posts each week for a grade of "C." The posts must be somehow grounded in our readings and not simply their opinion. Students who do not consistently participate in the discussion forum, are not allowed to take the examinations or to submit any other work. However, the number of postings, the memorization of facts or the regurgitation of the material in the discussion forum must not measure success in a web-based distance learning course. A good course focuses on mastery and depth of knowledge and an exploration of critical thinking skills. In many respects, web-based courses often allow an easier assessment of these outcomes because of the substantial writing component involved. On-line learners report that writing demands greater reflection than speaking and thus the learning environment tends to increase thinking and writing skills rather than diminish them as some educators maintain (Schrum, 55). As many others have, I have found that web interactivity helps engage students in active application of knowledge, principles and values, and provides them with feedback that allows their understanding to grow and evolve (Hazari and Schnorr, 32). Without completely trying to categorize my pedagogical approach, I believe that the Constructivist theory gives online teachers the best opportunity for creating active learners. Nancy Deal states that the Constructivist instructor is (1) student centered, not teacher- or text-centered, (2) encourages students to make meaning out of texts and create products illustrating their understanding, (3) believes in knowledge construction and wants students to be active learners, and (4) focuses on process and discovery learning (Deal, 52). I would like to add one additional point. The Constructivist must see that the student builds their knowledge base on rigorous standards. The foundation of the constructions of their students must be sufficiently deep for their house of knowledge to withstand and adapt to changes. Active learning must necessarily be connected to reflection and deep learning. This postmodernist learning environment, should enable the individual not only to use information and information technology effectively and adapt to their constant changes but also to think critically about the entire learning enterprise and information society (Shapiro, 32). As corporate values have come to define the educational enterprise, maybe on-line learning can be something more akin to a "liberal art" and therefore focus our attention on process rather than solely on outcomes. Liberal learning, knowledge that is part of what it means to be an autonomous person in the present historical context, can be the vehicle, which enables us to tame the monster. Postmodernist learning must extend from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its cultural and philosophical context and impact. This is "essential to the mental framework of the educated information-age citizen" (Shapiro, 33) and this postmodernist student/citizen is different in kind from our previous students.

The California Distance Learning Project (Palloff and Pratt, 8) reviews some of the research on successful students in distance education programs and suggests that students who are attracted to this form of education share certain characteristics. They

1. Are voluntarily seeking further education
2. Are motivated, have higher expectations, and are more self-disciplined

3. Tend to be older than the average student
4. Tend to possess a more serious attitude toward their courses

We can say that the characteristics of adult learners include the concept of autonomy, an orientation toward learning, and a strong internal motivation (Pratt, 1993). However, simply because an adult learner possesses these characteristics and has the prerequisite experiences, it does not follow that they are good learners; learning is not a given. It requires not only experience but reflection and a new trivium that consist of grammar, digital literacy, and, I think, philosophy. On-demand forms of learning, as well as many accelerated degree programs, simply do not allow sufficient time for reflective skills to develop.

Carol Twigg says that the best learning experiences begin with practice and end with theory (Twigg, 24) yet I think this approach is misguided. The best teaching experiences begin with theory and end with practice. Postmodern teaching should not be equated with a helter skelter approach. The creation of an on-line educational environment must include the identification of learning goals, philosophical changes in teaching and learning, reconceptualization of the teacher's role, evaluation of student and instructor, and the stimulation of interactivity. The salient questions are, What is the purpose of this course? And, What are the instructional and personal goals of this course? We must deal with Frankenstein's offspring; we are reconstructing our lived-in world and attention must be paid to what kind of educational environment we are creating.

With these introductory remarks, I invite you to attend the presentation in order for me to demonstrate the learning environment I created and for us to discuss some of the issues and concerns raised above and for you to share with the audience how you construct your on-line classes. You may access my fall web-based classes, Business Ethics and Ethical Theory and Analysis, by pointing your browser to <http://www.stedwards.edu/ursery/nceth.html>. These are the two classes I will be working with in my presentation. Unlike Frankenstein, his offspring can prove to be a beneficial technology if we work to create an academically sound educational environment. In doing this, we will make him happy and he shall be virtuous.

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Adult Learners and Distance Education Evaluation: Implications for Success

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Introduction

Barry University is an independent, coeducational Catholic institution of higher education, which fosters academic distinction in liberal arts and professional studies within the Judeo-Christian and Dominican tradition. Founded in 1940, the University is sponsored by the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan.

The School of Adult and Continuing Education offers accelerated degree programs to adult learners with class offerings in the evenings and Saturdays. In addition, the School awards up to thirty credits for prior college-level learning attained outside a formal institutional setting. Currently, this program is offered in fourteen sites throughout Florida. Recent acquisition of a local public television station has permitted us to offer telecourses as a distance learning component to our accelerated adult degree programs in eight sites over a five-county area. This distance program has been a valuable contribution in meeting the complex needs of our adult students, thus generating an increase in our program enrollment. The overall success of the first year of this program can be attributed to several factors. However, continuing success in any new program, for students and instructors alike, depends upon a continuous evaluation process.

This paper will address the specific telecourse evaluation process utilized for our program, as well as implications for adult students' success in such a program. While our School offers internet courses as well, this paper addresses only telecourses, although the terms telecourses, distance learning, and distance education are used synonymously.

Evaluation

Adult education is a leader among other fields in the use of a consumer perspective. Evaluation and examination of adult programs often concerns qualities important to a consumer – value for time and money invested, the amount of help received, whether the program was stimulating, and whether participating was pleasant (Steele, 1989).

Shortly after our telecourse program began in July of 1998, an evaluation questionnaire was designed to measure the student's overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the telecourse process, a "reflection on experience." Probably the evaluative activity most important to the program participant, teacher, and program coordinator is reflection on experience (Schon, 1987). This is the way most people evaluate what they have given and what they have received from a program; it captures the extent to which they value the experience they have had (Steele, 1989).

These evaluation questionnaires are typically sent to the students' homes after the end of each course, to be completed at the students' convenience. Anonymity is assured. The evaluation questionnaires are coded only for gender and demographic data. Properly and thoroughly completed, the evaluation provides feedback to all individuals engaged in the telecourses. This procedure is to be viewed as a cyclical process, allowing summative and formative decisions to be made and providing data for future refinement (Kowalski, 1988). While we also use a standard course/instructor evaluation during the term, this specific evaluation was designed as a means of assessing the students' impressions of the distance education experience in and of itself, and to provide valuable contributions toward continuing program development. Houle (1972) stressed that in interpreting and using evaluation data, both the successes and failures of the program should be examined. In addition, this evaluation process will also be used to compare learning outcomes for students who are enrolled in the same course in a traditional manner.

The telecourse evaluation asks the student whether or not this was their first experience with telecourses; how they heard about the telecourse program; whether or not they found support services accommodating; what they liked most and least about the process; whether they were satisfied with their advising; whether they were satisfied with testing procedures; whether they had any difficulty with the broadcast reception; what their motivation was for taking a telecourse; what their feelings were about the onsite sessions – how they could be more productive or beneficial; whether or not they will register for another telecourse; and future courses they would like to see delivered through this method. Space is made available after each question for additional comments.

Thoughtfully selected evaluation questions have provided us with adult students' thorough and detailed responses, which have been of considerable value to us in planning, marketing, orientation, advising, instruction, testing, course offerings, and overall administration of this new program.

Student Readiness for Distance Learning

As student advisors, we feel we know our students' academic ability well enough to ascertain whether or not they will be good candidates for telecourses. Understanding adults as learners and how to respond to their diversity and variability is essential (Galbraith, 1990). We ask our newly enrolled students at the time of registration whether or not they have ever taken a distance education course, and we ask this question again later, on the evaluation questionnaire, to assess how many students have previously taken a course through this method. Understanding who adults are as learners, what changes adults go through as they age, what motivates adults to seek learning experiences, and how adults accommodate the role of learner in addition to their other life roles is crucial to designing meaningful education programs and facilitating learning that takes place (Merriam and Cunningham, 1989).

Students are given a telecourse handbook at the time of registration. This handbook includes a brief self-evaluation summary, which assesses suitable criteria for successful telecourse completion. Questions are asked relating to self-motivation, independent learning, discipline, time management, organization, study habits, reading comprehension, exam taking, procrastination, tenacity, and responsibility for learning. Students' positive responses indicate a strong sense of self-directed learning potential, thus ensuring a measure of successful completion of the telecourse.

A highly successful self-directed learner is described as exhibiting initiative, independence, and persistence in learning; one who accepts responsibility for his or her own learning and views problems as challenges, not obstacles; one who is capable of self-discipline and has a high degree of curiosity; one who has a strong desire to learn or change and is self confident; one who is able to use basic study skills, organize his or her own time, set an appropriate pace for learning, and develop a plan for completing work; one who enjoys learning and has a tendency to be goal oriented (Guglielmino, 1977). Not all students fit into these categories for self-directed learners, however. Claims that adults are innately self-directed, or inherently critical thinkers, cannot be empirically supported (Brookfield, 1992). Occasionally, a student will take a telecourse only to comment after that they realize the need for structure that a classroom provides.

Since the majority of our students have been away from the classroom for many years, it is important for them to learn how to study and learn again. A new or returning student is generally advised to take a traditional classroom course their first term. Obviously, this leads to increased opportunities to participate in more self-directed activities before entering a completely self-directed course, making it more of an adaptive process. Not all students, however, need the structure of a classroom and may do very well in a telecourse as their first back-to-school experience. Telecourses foster students to diagnose and develop their personal learning needs and formulate learning objectives.

Adult students tend to be quite proactive in their educational choices. They have a genuine interest in what they learn and how they learn, since their participation is voluntary.

It is important to involve the adult learner in a mutual planning of methods and curriculum and in diagnosing their personal learning needs. As advisers, we encourage our adult students to formulate their learning objectives, to identify resources, and to devise strategies for using such resources to accomplish their objectives. We help our students ultimately carry out their learning plans and involve them in evaluating their learning (Galbraith, 1990). Distance learning provides the adult student and advisor with an alternative learning method to consider as part of their overall educational objective.

Student Support Services

Support services must promote academic progress and, hopefully, the development of the learner. The academic advisor plays a very important role in fostering self-direction and student development (Kok and Brown, 1998). One important feature of our adult student program at Barry University is our personal advising relationship with our students. Our friendly, open door policy is most often listed as one of the factors to which our students owe their success, and referrals are most often based primarily on this single issue. As program advisors and directors, we pride ourselves on this "personalization." We take time to work with our students to help them define and achieve their educational objectives. Thus, with the onset of the telecourse program, we found it necessary to establish new policies and practices which would continue to provide this personal attention for our distance learning students.

The evaluation questionnaire was the first method initiated to monitor students' feelings about this new method of course delivery, and to help us determine if we needed to adapt our advising methods to suit their changing needs. In addition to the questionnaire, a number of other support services have been instituted with the new telecourse program.

Newsletter – A student newsletter is generated each term to provide students with new telecourse information, important dates, announcements, program and/or policy changes, and other helpful registration and enrollment data.

Handbook – A telecourse handbook is given to students to review at the time of course registration. This handbook contains a brief introduction to telecourses and what to expect, along with a self-evaluation, "Are telecourses for you?" It outlines benefits for students, important facts about telecourses, instructions for the mandatory onsite sessions, where to get course materials, library resource information, cable conversion guide, testing procedures, off-campus site contacts, registration and tuition information, and detailed information on the specific telecourses available that term. A television airing schedule is also provided to the student at the first onsite session. Students are responsible for watching or taping the telecourses. They are made aware that if they miss a scheduled broadcast, a complete set of all course tapes is available at the off-campus sites.

Website – A distance education website provides links to all distance education instructors and their respective courses each term. General distance education information is provided, as well as online resources, and current technological and distance education articles. A brainstorming area is provided where students' ideas can be exchanged with instructors and other students.

Focus on adequate student support as an essential element of learning may be one of the most distinctive features of quality control in distance learning environments (Phipps, Wellman, and Merisotis, 1998).

Motivation

My work demands too much of my time for regular classes; I have transportation problems and cannot get to a regular class; I have a disability which keeps me home much of the time; I prefer this method of learning; I thought it would be less demanding; I wanted to try something new; I prefer to structure my own learning schedule; I am a single parent and need more time with my children.

Most psychologists use the word motivation to describe those processes that can energize behavior and give direction or purpose to behavior. Adults are adaptable and highly motivated to complete their education in a timely manner. Motivation can be unstable, however, when one looks at the adult's world as filled with competitors for attention and effort. Family, friends, job, and the rest of many attractions and necessities of any adult's life all compete with education for time and involvement (Wlodkowski, 1990). As long ago as 1926, Lindeman wrote that individual differences among people increase with age; therefore, adult education must make optimal provision for differences in style, time, place, and pace of learning (Lindeman, 1926). Adult students are often under pressure to get a degree due to external expectations (fulfill expectations or recommendations of their employer), or for personal advancement (to achieve higher status in their job, secure professional advancement, and stay abreast of competitors). Telecourses provide a means by which they can accelerate this process at their own pace and continue to effectively maintain their work, home, family, and other responsibilities.

Convenience and independent learning is by far the number one reason students take our telecourses. Other factors mentioned often include job and family responsibilities, transportation problems, and health or disability factors. For some students, telecourses allow the opportunity to earn more credits each term. This is particularly true in the case of our students receiving financial aid. They must maintain a full time enrollment status. By adding a telecourse or two to their schedule, this balance allows them more time to devote to family or career responsibilities.

Since these telecourses are available to all of our adult students as elective courses, we often enroll a nursing or education major who is enrolled in a full time program during the day and finds this delivery method is their only option in taking certain prerequisite courses.

Advantages

I don't have to attend weekly class; I can set my own schedule; It is very flexible; I can view tapes over and over; I can work in the comfort of my own home; I have more time to assimilate information; The tapes give us guest speakers each week; I like the uninterrupted lectures; I can stop and pause to write; I can share my class with my family; I don't have to travel so far to class.

Our evaluation responses indicate there are a number of advantages to telecourses, particularly to adult students who are trying to balance a career, family and education. A traditional degree program is often impossible to complete for these students. Our evening/weekend adult degree program, in conjunction with telecourses, offers adults the opportunity to achieve their educational goals in an accelerated manner.

The majority of our students cite flexibility and convenience as the major advantage to taking courses in this manner. Other advantages mentioned are the preference for independent study; uninterrupted lecture formats; more time to assimilate information; infrequent onsite sessions, which minimize travel; opportunity to spend more time with family; the ability to stop, pause and write during the taped lectures; being able to share tapes with family and friends; and having the tapes to watch for review.

Eighty percent (80%) of our telecourse students this first year have been female. Distance education can be seen as having a potentially important contribution in overcoming barriers to women's participation in education, and has a very important role in women's development. Women, in particular, have constraints of time, space, resources, and socio-economic disabilities. Telecourses can help by enabling them to learn and earn at their own pace, as well as fulfilling family responsibilities (Evans, 1995).

There may even be some learning outcomes that are more readily achieved in a distance learning environment than in a traditional classroom. Adult skill learning can be facilitated when individual learners assess their own skills and strategies to discover inadequacies or limitations for themselves (Brundage and MacKeracher, 1980) , which often occurs in distance learning. Distance courses may better support students in developing and honing certain such as self-directed learning, teamwork, and problem solving skills (Levenburg and Major, 1998). Students maintain a greater degree of control over their study processes – they can select approaches consistent with their individual learning styles. By removing time pressures, distance learning encourages reflective thinking. It stimulates creativity by removing perceived pressures from the peer group, and perhaps by the presence of the instructor, that may inhibit certain students from taking risks in the classroom (Moore, 1990).

By removing artificial boundaries of time and space of the defined, sometimes rigid, "traditional" classroom, distance education can even enhance the ability to communicate, which is actually the foundation of any educational experience (Shoemaker, 1998).

Disadvantages

It's easy to get behind; Two tests aren't enough to test our knowledge since there is so much information; More frequent, shorter tests would help organize and structure the material better; They are a lot more work and take more time than a regular class; I miss the interaction with other students and the instructor; I never had a chance to connect with my classmates.

Despite the advantages of distance education, various obstacles still prevent many adult learners from participating.

Learning at a distance is a difficult undertaking that requires considerable self-discipline and determination (Shoemaker, 1998). Just as students and faculty find many advantages to this delivery method, of course, there are also disadvantages. One drawback is that students find the distance programs often require more homework than a traditional class. They often enroll in such a course thinking it will require less work and less time, only to find out that they are spending more time with research and independent assignments.

A few students mentioned that they found it easy to procrastinate, subsequently finding themselves too far behind to catch up with the class. Self-discipline cannot be emphasized enough as being a key element in a student's distance education success. For some students, it was difficult to stay on track without the structure of a traditional classroom and weekly lectures.

Another perceived drawback for students is the lack of interaction with the instructor and fellow classmates. This feeling of isolation prevents the student from knowing how they are progressing academically in a telecourse. They may be unsure of themselves and their learning. Some of our distance instructors have alleviated this somewhat by requiring weekly quizzes, which allows the students to monitor their learning progress. Appropriate support and feedback are required in an educational transaction to counteract one of the major complaints of [distance students] – the sense of isolation and need for affiliation (Persons and Catchpole, 1987). Chat rooms or regular e-mail or telephone communication can also alleviate this lack of weekly interaction. However, in a telecourse, unlike other distance learning methods, computer access is not necessarily a requirement, only strongly recommended as a successful distance learning tool.

Fortunately, most of our students state that this lack of interaction is a small price to pay for the overall convenience afforded by this method of instruction. Unlike traditional students who often require the socialization a classroom format and campus atmosphere provides, adult learners have moved beyond this need with the many other activities their lives provide.

Summary

Our students are consumers – the evolving evaluation process asks them whether their education was commensurate with their investment, whether they received help when necessary, whether they were stimulated by the program, and whether they enjoyed participating – all factors which contribute to ongoing success and growth.

Overall, our students have been highly enthusiastic about telecourses and distance learning throughout the first year of the program. Our evaluation process clearly indicates that students are excited about this new method of course delivery.

Adult learners must be active participants in the evaluation process in order to maintain their commitment and retention. It is important to review program goals and objectives periodically with the students and to obtain their feedback. As a result of this, modifications may be necessary. This builds a climate of mutual respect and trust, collaboration, support, and authenticity for the educational process and for all involved (Galbraith, 1990).

By continuing to listen to our students through the evaluation process, we are confident that our program will continue to develop successfully. "Like guides, we walk at times ahead of our students, at times beside them, and at times, we follow their lead." (Daloz, (1986, p.237).

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Adult Learning and Motivation in Accelerated Courses

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For three years we have been studying a counterintuitive observation: adult students in accelerated courses who apparently learn as well as students in traditional courses. In other words, adult students who seem to learn as much as traditional-age students do in less than half the time (20 contact hours in five weeks vs. 40 contact hours in 16 weeks). We have been investigating this phenomenon from a learner-centered perspective: student perceptions, alumni perceptions, and student performance. In our findings, thus far, the motivation and experience of adult learners appear central to explaining how learning may occur in less time than is normally expected.

Background

The School for Professional Studies at Regis University primarily serves working adult learners (enrollment: 10,500) and offers accelerated classroom-based and accelerated distance education courses (5 and 8 week formats). New Ventures of Regis University is a program that assists higher education institutions to develop their own accelerated degree-completion programs for working adults. There are 18 colleges and universities in the New Ventures' Partner Schools' network. Four of these schools: Davenport College, Emmanuel College, Rosemont College, and St. Ambrose University participated in this study along with Regis University.

Purposes

In this ongoing research, we began with the goal of assessing the quality of accelerated courses from a learner-centered perspective. We realized we would need multiple indicators to increase the validity of our findings. This orientation led us to ask the following four research questions:

1. What are current student attitudes and perceptions toward accelerated courses?
2. What are alumni attitudes and perceptions toward accelerated courses?
3. What is current student content mastery as judged by faculty experts?
4. Is there a relationship between time in class and length of course on student learning and attitudes — If the same instructor teaches a traditional version (16 weeks, 40 contact hours) and an accelerated version (5 weeks, 20 contact hours) of the same course using the same texts, the same tests, and covering the same learning objectives with very similar teaching methods, will there be a significant difference in learning or attitude between students in the traditional class and students in the accelerated class?

Methodology and Findings

Current Students' Attitudes and Perceptions

We chose the following six courses to investigate: Accounting II, Business Law, Corporate Finance, Introduction to Philosophy, Management, and Management of Human Resources. We chose these because they had experienced instructors, were consistently offered, existed in the same accelerated format, and had very similar curricula and learning objectives across the colleges in the study. They also represented, in content, a variety of disciplines: math, business, law, and philosophy.

We developed a twenty-two item self-report survey based on the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching[1] and indicators of instructional quality. Briefly stated, the theory for this motivational framework holds that most adults are highly motivated to learn when they feel included (respected within the learning group), have a positive attitude (find the subject matter relevant), can make learning meaningful (find learning engaging and challenging), and are becoming competent (effective at what they value). This survey offered four response choices for each item: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Cronbach's Alpha for the entire scale was .93. It was administered in the last two hours of the final class session. In 1996 and 1998 a total of 227 students responded. The average age of the students was 36.5. Most of the students were European American (75.3%) and women (70.9%) with the largest ethnic minority groups being Hispanic (8.8%) and African American (7.5%).

Student responses of particular importance to adult motivation are found below (Percentage indicated is the total percent of students who chose strongly agree or agree responses.):

1. Overall, this course was a valuable learning experience. 98.2%
7. The teacher respected student opinions and ideas. 98.7%
10. This course was relevant to my goals. 92.5%
11. This course helped me to be effective at what I value. 89.0%
14. This course challenged me to think. 96.5%
19. In this course I felt included. 98.2%

Alumni Perceptions and Attitudes

The same version of the self-report survey used with the current students was sent to graduates (1995, 1996, and 1997) of the Business Management Programs at the colleges. As a group, the graduates totaled 1200 people and represented a sample that had experienced a much wider range of instructors than the current students. Surveys were sent to 250 randomly selected alumni: 179 were returned, for a return rate of 72%.

Alumni were asked to evaluate only the courses they had completed from among Corporate Finance, Management, and Management of Human Resources. These three courses were chosen because they were consistent with the academic major of the alumni and were likely to insure the highest response rate. In addition, added to the four possible responses from strongly agree to strongly disagree was a fifth: cannot adequately remember.

The average age of the alumni was 38. Most of these students were European American (84.4%) and women (66.6%) with the largest ethnic minority groups being Hispanic (6.7%), Asian-Pacific Islander (4.5%), and African American (2.8%).

Alumni responses of particular importance to adult motivation are found below (Percentage indicated is the total percent of alumni who chose strongly agree or agree responses.):

1. Overall, this course was a valuable learning experience. 92.7%
7. The teacher respected student opinions and ideas. 86.1%
10. This course was relevant to my goals. 88.1%
11. This course helped me to be effective at what I value. 84.8%
14. This course challenged me to think. 91.8%
19. In this course I felt included. 87.1%

Current Student Performance and Content Mastery

For the six courses selected for this investigation, faculty experts created summative questions and case studies based on two or more of the major objectives of these courses. All assessments required critical thinking and application of a learned knowledge base. With the exception of the philosophy course, students had to analyze the cases, find the most pertinent issues and evidence, relate this understanding to theory, and offer recommendations or resolve problems. These questions and case studies were administered to the students according to a standardized script in the last two hours of the final class session.

For each course, three faculty experts assessed the written question and case study responses. Each faculty expert taught in the discipline represented by the course. With the exception of the philosophy course, the faculty experts were professionally employed as well, e.g., accountants and lawyers. The faculty experts were not aware of any of the demographics (age, gender, etc.) of the students nor the course format (traditional or accelerated) from which the student papers were selected. For the portion of the study which included students from traditional courses as well as accelerated courses, each team of three faculty experts had at least one faculty member who currently taught in a traditional program and one who taught in an accelerated program.

The faculty experts created dimensions of performance and related criteria to assess the quality of student responses. The dimensions of performance were:

1. For Accounting II: Calculation for Financial Accounting, Conceptual Understanding for Financial Accounting, Calculation for Managerial Accounting, Conceptual Understanding for Managerial Accounting, and Writing Skills;
2. For Business Law: Legal Reasoning and Writing Skills;
3. For Introduction to Philosophy: Critical Thinking and Writing Skills;
4. For Corporate Finance: Calculation, Interpretation, Quality of Recommendations, and Writing Skills.
5. For Management: Critical Thinking, Practical Application, Knowledge Base, and Writing Skills.
6. For Management of Human Resources: Critical Thinking, Practical Application, Knowledge Base, and Writing Skills.

Three faculty experts assessed each student response for each dimension of performance. Using a paired comparison method, interrater reliability for each course was 90% or higher. Table 1 indicates individual average scores attained by 164 students across all applied dimensions of performance in the accelerated courses (Corporate Finance, Management, Management of Human Resources) studied in 1996 and 1998.

Table 1

Individual Student Averages across All Applied Dimensions of Performance for Accelerated Courses (n = 164)

Range of Averages (Experts' Rating)	Number of Students	Percentage of Total
7-8 (near excellent to excellent)	22	13.4%
6-6.99 (very good to near excellent)	28	17.1%
5-5.99 (more than satisfactory to very good)	30	18.3%
4-4.99 (satisfactory to more than satisfactory)	38	23.2%
3-3.99 (less than satisfactory to satisfactory)	33	20.1%
2-2.99 (not acceptable to less than satisfactory)	13	7.9%

Keeping in mind that the instructors, academic performance tasks, faculty experts and criteria for performance differ among the three accelerated courses represented in Table 1, the average for all students across all applied dimensions of performance was 5.0 (more than satisfactory). The average for all students for writing skills in these courses was 5.4 (more than satisfactory). The percentage of all students who averaged 4.0 (satisfactory) or better on all dimensions of performance for these accelerated courses was 72.0%. Thus, on the average, students in these accelerated courses are performing more than satisfactorily at college level work. Seven out of ten of them have met a standard of satisfactory to excellent in the courses that have been studied in 1996 and 1998.

Relationship between Time in Class and Length of Course on Student Attitudes and Learning

Attitudes. The three courses selected for this phase of the study were: Accounting II, Business Law, and Introduction to Philosophy because each course could be arranged to have the same instructor teach a traditional and an accelerated version of the course during the Fall semester of 1997. There were a total of 132 students in the study: 66 students in traditional courses and 66 students in accelerated courses. All instructors signed a letter of agreement that outlined how they were to make the traditional and accelerated version of each courses as similar as possible. These expectations and conditions were identical for all courses.

The researchers measured student perceptions and attitudes with the same 22 item self-report survey identified earlier in this article. The researchers found the following important demographic differences between the students in the traditional courses and the students in the accelerated courses:

	Traditional Courses n = 66	*Accelerated Courses n = 66*
Mean Age	20.2 (std. dev. = 3.2)	35.9 (std. dev. = 8.8)
Gender	44% Male 56% Female	29% Male 71% Female
Mean Years of Work Experience	4	19

Attitudes for both groups of students were very positive. For all items (twenty-two) in the survey the average agreement for students in traditional courses was 94.3%, with students in the accelerated courses averaging 93.8%. For those items particular to motivation, there were no significant differences between students in the traditional courses and students in the accelerated courses.

Learning and Content Mastery. When accelerated courses are compared to traditional courses there are no trends or statistically significant differences in student performance scores favoring either format. To place these findings in a more general context, the average for all students in traditional courses across all applied dimensions of performance is 4.66 (more than satisfactory). Among these students, 77.6 percent average 4.0 (satisfactory) or better across all applied dimensions of performance. The average for all students in accelerated courses across all applied dimensions of performance is 4.95 (more than satisfactory). Among these students, 81.0 percent average 4.0 (satisfactory) or better across all applied dimensions of performance. Therefore, regardless of format, traditional or accelerated, in terms of academic performance, four out of five students in this study met a standard of satisfactory to excellent for course work at the college level as judged by faculty experts.

Discussion

The self-report survey consistently indicates that current adult student perceptions of the accelerated courses are positive. Viable reasons for such affirmative student perceptions are that the motivational conditions for inclusion, positive attitude, meaning, and competence are being met along with effective instruction and materials. However, student evaluations of courses generally are positive and indicative of student satisfaction. Although alumni perceptions of the accelerated courses are also positive, one must keep in mind that these courses were part of their major and their positive attitudes may be related to this fact as well.

The content mastery of current students provides a salient perspective, where the basis for their attitudes in actual accomplishment can be investigated. The tasks and criteria created by the faculty experts were rigorous. For the six courses in this study, at least seven out of ten of the students provided evidence of content mastery that was rated from satisfactory to excellent. Based on this evidence, one can propose that adult students who accomplish challenging, authentic tasks (as they did with the case studies and problems in this study), are reasonable to believe they are learning something of value under motivating conditions and with effective instruction. Indeed, for the accelerated courses investigated, the adult students appear to have similar positive attitudes and learn as well as the younger students in the traditional versions of the same courses.

Thus far in our research, the differences in time between the traditional courses (16 weeks, 40 contact hours) and the accelerated courses (5 weeks, 20 contact hours) do not relate to a discernable difference in learning between two groups of students when each group takes the same course, with the same instructor, texts, tests, and very similar instructional methods. However, the students in the accelerated courses are different from the students in the traditional courses. They are, on the average, 15 years older with 15 years more work experience. Many more of them are women.

These differences are part of a constellation of characteristics that may provide an advantage for adult students in accelerated formats. Since these are private colleges and these adults self-select into accelerated programs, they may be predisposed toward self-direction in their learning[4]. Their ability to focus and self-regulate their learning may allow them to read and study at rates which compensate for the shorter duration of accelerated courses. In addition, proximal goals are far more achievable than distal goals[5]. Learners in accelerated courses have only to concentrate on one course at a time for five weeks at a time, unlike traditional students who face four or five courses and must allocate their time over 16 weeks. Finally, the research of Jacqueline Eccles[6] indicates women to be highly motivated by the identity and attainment value of academic tasks. It is likely that many of the women in the accelerated courses are in the process of using this learning to acquire better jobs and advance their careers. It may be that the greater work experience, self-direction, and personal motivation of the adult students provide for an optimal interaction with the proximal goals of instruction at an accelerated pace to allow them to achieve learning indistinguishable from younger students in traditional courses, even though the adults' duration of time and class contact hours for learning are significantly less.

The findings of this research reflect the evidence of most studies assessing accelerated learning formats: that students, especially adults, appreciate their effectiveness and the strong interest they cultivate[7]. In our research to date, alumni and current students indicate that conditions of intrinsic motivation and effective instruction can permeate these courses. There is initial evidence that adults in accelerated courses do satisfactorily learn in a manner that meets the challenge of traditional college coursework.

Issues for Further Research

In general, in order to validate the generalizability of these findings we need to increase the courses and their variety as well as the sample sizes in our research. We also need to compare adult students in accelerated formats with adult students in traditional formats of the same courses. No courses at the three colleges offered large enough samples (adults in traditional courses) to make these comparisons. These studies need to be done.

The self-direction and goal orientations of the adult students were assumed based on research studies in the literature. Measures and comparisons of the self-direction and goal orientation of adult students in accelerated and traditional courses should be conducted to ascertain if the assumed differences hold true.

Since the colleges in this study are private schools and the adults in these accelerated courses have self-selected to be there, it is quite possible that other adults may not prefer accelerated formats or may have dropped out of these programs due to lack of success. Further research should investigate these possibilities as well as the retention patterns of adult students in accelerated courses to understand the variables that influence how adults respond to this format as well as what might be done to retain more learners.

Footnotes

1. Raymond J. Wlodkowski, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, revised edition, 1999, pp. 79-88.
2. Alexander W. Astin, *What Matters in College?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993, pp. 273-281.
3. *Ibid.,* pp.281-283.

4. Sharan B. Merriam and Rosemary S. Caffarella. *Learning in Adulthood.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, second edition, 1999, pp.288-317.

5. Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham. *A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1990, pp. 150-181.

6. Jacqueline S. Eccles, "Interest and Enjoyment as Components of Task Value," Presentation at the National Conference of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego: April 13, 1998.

7. Patricia A. Scott and Clifton F. Conrad, "A Critique of Intensive Courses and an Agenda for Research," In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research,* Vol. 8, New York: Agathon Press, 1992, pp. 411-459.

Highly Motivating Instruction for Culturally Diverse Adult Students

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One of the problems with understanding motivation is we cannot see it and we cannot touch it. It is what is known in the social sciences as a hypothetical construct, an invented definition that provides a possible concrete causal explanation of behavior. Therefore, we cannot observe motivation directly nor measure it precisely. We have to infer it from what people do. So we look for signs such as effort, persistence, and completion.

We also know culture, that deeply learned mix of language, beliefs, values, and behaviors that pervades every aspect of our lives, significantly influences our motivation. In fact, social scientists today regard the cognitive processes as inherently cultural (Rogoff and Chavajay, 1995). The language we use to think and how we communicate cannot be separated from cultural practices and cultural context. As Vivian Gussin Paley (p. xii, 1990) writes, "None of us are to be found in sets of tasks or lists of attributes; we can be known only in the unfolding of our unique stories within the context of everyday events."

Learning is a naturally active and normally volitional process of constructing meaning from information and experience (McCombs and Lambert, 1997). Motivation is the natural human capacity to direct energy in the pursuit of a goal. Although our lives are marked by a continuous flow of activity within an infinite variety of overt actions, we are purposeful. We constantly learn, and when we do we are usually motivated to learn. We are directing our energy through the processes of attention, concentration, and imagination, to name only few, to make sense of our world.

Until about a decade ago, an individualistic understanding of motivation dominated the field of psychology. Personal motives, thoughts, expectancies, and goals were concepts that had a strong influence on psychological approaches to facilitate student motivation and learning. Currently, socio-constructivism is a rapidly growing theoretical force in understanding ways to improve learning in schools and colleges (Hickey, 1997). Critical to this view is the realization that people learn through their interaction with and support from other people and objects in the world. We are more aware that to help a person learn may require understanding a person's thinking and emotions as inseparable from the social context in which the activity takes place.

With the rich cultural diversity within this country, we need models to guide teachers in effective ways to access and strengthen their students' individual skills as well as to include the understanding they bring to learning based on their social experiences. The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, 1995) is a model for teaching and planning instruction based on the principle that individual motivation is inseparable from culture. It offers a pedagogical approach for creating learning experiences that evoke the intrinsic motivation of all students.

Motivation Is Inseparable from Culture

Colleges are becoming learning environments with increasing numbers of culturally diverse students. To be effective with all students, faculty have to relate their content to the experiences and ways in which their students know. Teaching that ignores student norms of behavior and communication provokes student resistance, while teaching that is responsive prompts student involvement (Olneck, 1995).

Engagement in learning is the visible outcome of motivation. Our emotions are a part of and significantly influence our motivation. In turn, our emotions are socialized through culture. For example, one person working at a task feels frustrated and stops, while another person working at the task feels joy and continues. Yet another person, with an even different set of cultural beliefs, feels frustrated at the task but continues with increased determination. What may elicit that frustration, joy, or determination may differ across cultures, because cultures differ in their definitions of novelty, hazard, opportunity, and gratification, and in their definitions of appropriate responses (Kitayama and Markus, 1994).

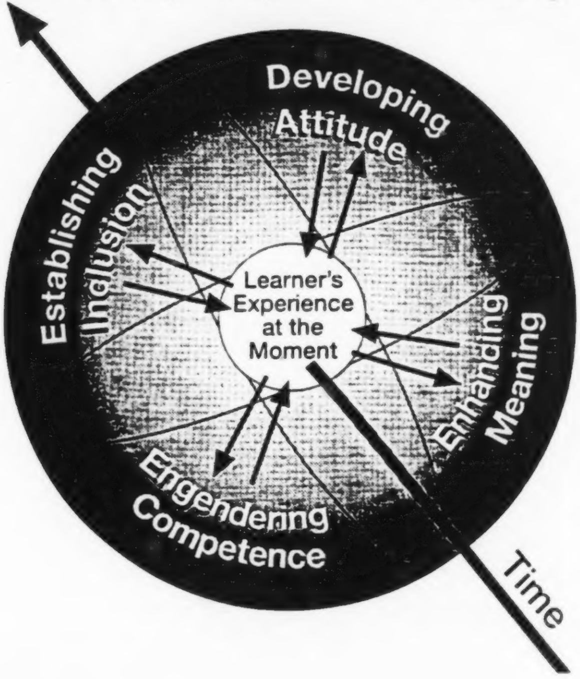
Today, teachers inevitably face the reality that what may enhance the motivation of some students may diminish the motivation of others. Icebreakers are a good example of this phenomenon. Many courses begin with activities to create a more sociable mood. Some of these ask students to self-disclose personal feelings or circumstances to other students, who, at the time, are strangers to them. Some students enjoy sharing such personal information with people who are relatively unknown to them. However, studies consistently reveal that self-disclosure of this nature may be incompatible with the cultural values of Asian Americans, Latinos, and American Indians, who often reserve expression of personal feelings for the intimacy of family (Sue and Sue, 1990). An early request for self-disclosure might be disconcerting for students from these ethnic backgrounds and stimulate a sense of alienation from the rest of the class or the course itself. Without sensitivity to culture, we, as teachers, may unknowingly contribute to the decline of motivation among our students.

The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching

To promote equitable learning opportunities for all students, a holistic, culturally responsive pedagogy based on intrinsic motivation is needed. The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, 1995) is respectful of different cultures and is capable of creating a common culture within a learning situation that all students can accept. It dynamically combines the essential motivational conditions that are intrinsically motivating for diverse students (See Figure 1). Motivational strategies from an individualistic or socio-constructivist perspective can be assigned and understood according to the condition to which they most obviously contribute. Each of these major conditions is research based across a number of disciplines (Wlodkowski,1999).

Figure 1

A Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching



The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching

The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching is systemic representation of four intersecting motivational conditions that teachers and students can create or enhance. The four essential conditions are:

1. *Establishing Inclusion:* Creating a learning atmosphere in which students and teachers feel respected and connected to one another.
2. *Developing Attitude:* Creating a favorable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and choice.
3. *Enhancing Meaning:* Creating challenging, thoughtful, learning experiences that include students' perspectives and values.
4. *Engendering Competence:* Creating an understanding that students are effective in learning something they value.

As we have discussed earlier, increasingly, researchers view cognition as a social activity that integrates the mind, the body, the process of the activity, and the ingredients of the setting in a complex interactive manner (Lave, 1988). The conventional psychological model of perceiving, thinking, acting is a linear process that may occur far less often than previous theorists have imagined. Since the four motivational conditions work in concert and exert their influence on student learning in the moment as well as over time, the teacher is wise to plan how to establish and coordinate these conditions where possible.

Motivation planning can be integrated with instructional planning or it can be used in addition to instructional planning. This will help to avoid a serious pitfall common to teaching: blaming the students for being unresponsive to instruction. With no motivation plan to analyze for possible solution to motivational difficulties that arise during instruction, especially with students who are culturally different from ourselves, we are more likely to place responsibility for this state of affairs upon them. It is difficult for us to be openly self-critical. Defense mechanisms like rationalization and projection act to protect our egos. Motivation planning helps to keep our attention on the learning climate and how we instruct and what we can do about that instruction when it is not as vital as we would like it to be. This diminishes our tendency to blame, which is a common reaction to problems that seem unsolvable.

Applying the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Let us take a look at the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching in terms of the teaching/learning process. Because most instructional plans have specific learning objectives, they tend to be linear and prescriptive: teachers sequence learning events over time and predetermine the order in which concepts and skills are taught and when they are practiced and applied. Although human motivation does not always follow an orderly path, we can plan ways to evoke it throughout a learning sequence. In fact, due to motivation's emotional base and natural instability, it is judicious, especially facing a time limited learning period, to painstakingly plan the milieu and learning activities to enhance student motivation. For projects, self-directed learning, and situational learning as in the case of problem posing we may not be so bound to a formal plan.

The most basic way to begin is for the teacher to take the four motivational conditions from the framework and to transpose them into questions to use as guidelines for selecting motivational strategies (Wlodkowski, 1999) and related learning activities to include in the design of the instructional plan:

1. *Establishing Inclusion:* How do we create or affirm a learning atmosphere in which we feel respected by and connected to one another? (Best to plan for the beginning of the lesson)
2. *Developing Attitude:* How do we create or affirm a favorable disposition toward learning through personal relevance and choice? (Best to plan for the beginning of the lesson)

3. *Enhancing Meaning:* How do we create engaging and challenging learning experiences that include learner perspectives and values? (Best to plan throughout the lesson)
4. *Engendering Competence:* How do we create or affirm an understanding that learners have effectively learned something they value and perceive as authentic to their real world? (Best to plan for the ending of the lesson)

Let us look at an actual episode of teaching where a teacher uses the motivational framework and these questions to compose an instructional plan. In this example the teacher is conducting the first two-hour session of an introductory course in research. There are twenty students ranging in age from nineteen to fifty-five. Some hold full time jobs. Most are women. Most are first generation college students. A few are students of color. The instructor knows from previous experience that many of these students view research as abstract, irrelevant, and oppressive learning. Her instructional objective is: Students will devise an in-class investigation and develop their own positive perspectives toward active research. Using the motivation conditions and their related questions, the instructor creates the sequence of learning activities found in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1

An Instructional Plan based on the Four Questions from the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Motivational Condition And question	Motivational Strategy	Learning Activity
Establishing Inclusion: How do we create or affirm a learning atmosphere in which we feel respected by connected to one another? (Beginning)	Collaborative Learning	Randomly form small groups in which students exchange experiences and expectations they have about research. List them.
Developing Attitude: How do we create or affirm a favorable disposition toward learning through personal relevance and choice? (Beginning)	Relevant Learning Goals	Ask students to choose something they want to immediately research among themselves.
Enhancing Meaning: How do we create engaging and challenging learning experiences that include student perspectives and values? *(Throughout)*	Critical Questioning and Predicting	Form research teams to devise a set of questions to ask in order to make predictions. Record questions and predictions.
Engendering Competence: How do we create or affirm understanding that students have effectively learned something they value and perceive as authentic to their real world? *(Ending)*	Self-Assessment:	After the predictions have been verified,ask students an to create their own statements about what they learned about research from this process.

The narrative for this teaching episode goes like this: The teacher explains that much research is conducted on a collaborative basis. The course will model this approach as well. For a beginning activity she randomly assigns learners to small groups and encourages them to discuss any previous experiences they may have had doing research and their expectations and concerns for the course (strategy: collaborative learning). Each group then shares its experiences, expectations, and concerns as she records them on the overhead. In this manner, she is able to understand her students' perspectives and to increase their connection to one another and herself (motivational condition: establishing inclusion).

The teacher explains that most people are researchers much of the time. She asks the students what they would like to research among themselves (strategy: relevant learning goal). After a lively discussion, the class decides to investigate and predict the amount of sleep some members of the class had the previous night. This strategy engages student choice, increases the relevance of the activity, and contributes to a favorable disposition emerging in the course (motivational condition: developing attitude). The students are learning in a way that includes their experiences and perspectives.

Five students volunteer to serve as subjects, and the other students form research teams. Each team develops a set of observations and a set of questions to ask the volunteers, but no one can ask them how many hours of sleep they had the night before. After they ask their questions, the teams rank the five volunteers from the most to the least amount of sleep (strategy: critical questioning and predicting). When the volunteers reveal the amount of time they slept, the students discover that no research team was correct in ranking more than three volunteers. The students discuss why this outcome may have occurred, and consider questions that might have increased their accuracy, such as, "How much coffee did you drink before you came to class?" The questioning, testing of ideas, and predicting heighten the engagement, challenge, and complexity of this learning for the students (motivational condition: enhancing meaning).

After the discussion, the teacher asks the students to write a series of statements about what this activity has taught them about research (strategy: self-assessment). Students then break into small groups to exchange their insights. Their comments include statements such as, "Research is more a method than an answer," and "Thus far, I enjoy research more than I thought I would." Self-assessment helps the students to extract from this experience a new understanding they value (motivational condition: engendering competence).

This class session, like all learning experiences, is systemic. It can be imagined that removing any one of the four motivational conditions would have affected the entire experience and each condition's link to the entire course. For example, would the students' attitude have been as positive if the teacher had arbitrarily given them the task to research sleep among themselves? Probably not.

One of the values of the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching is that it is not only a model of motivation in action but an organizational aid for designing instruction. By continually attending to its four motivational conditions and their related questions, the teacher can select motivational strategies from a wide array of theories and literature to apply throughout a learning unit.

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Alice in Web Land: Crawling Toward Quality Learning and Instruction in Hyperspace at a Modest Institution

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San Francisco Alliance Conference the participant learned of opportunities to hear the finest talking heads available at the worlds finest research institutions. In "Vision of a Visionary" by John G. Sperling in the Phoenix Institute's own Assessment and Accountability Forum one reads "Changes (homogenization) for (non-elite institutions) will be driven by the new publicly traded education corporations."(1999 Spring).

Our initial research indicates sharply polarized views among both faculty and students. In order to overcome a discourse of enthusiasts and detractors, we will carefully document choices made as our institution develops more web-based instruction. While folks appear to for or against changes, our experiences indicate a wide variety of options on what one might fairly call a heterogeneous WWW. We will seek an appropriate technological niche for our adult students and ourselves from three perspectives: an experienced teacher who is a personal computer novice, an adult instructional design Ph.D. candidate, and a more computer literate adult educator.

Our institution has been historically cautious and reluctant to offer WWW based alternative programming for adult students. Now we as an institution made the huge leap to web-based education. Lauderdale has served on the institution's academic computing committee since 1994 and has experienced clear administrative and faculty reluctance at each institutional step. Quality, evaluation based decision making, power, fairness, support, perceived satisfaction, and rigor have all been discussed and sometimes addressed.

In writing the "Three year plan for the university," a minority of the academic computing committee advocated an investigation of best practice and faculty development in order to provide an alternative education for students at a distance. This advocacy continued for some time with some clear resistance from academic computing and little support from administrative leadership. Distance education was voted on as part of the three-year plan but omitted when the plan was drafted and had to be reinserted. We formed a subcommittee on distance education that compiled examples of other university actions and presented examples of quality in WWW distance education. The ACE Alliance Principles of Good Practice and the Open University policy and three year cycle for course development were part of this report.

This past year, the university administration decided to employ the College to mount thirty Web courses. Within two years time we went from a decision that designing a university web page required more study to having multiple committees implementing distance education over the web. Calls for decisive action left little time for any further studies or needs assessment. Nonetheless, our School of Continuing Education undertook such a study. We moved from a point where some faculty were pressuring the university for some internet based distance education to an administration pressuring faculty to develop web courses with little broad faculty involvement. One phenomenon that complicates a comparison of approaches to WWW education is the nature of the debate within the large community of higher education. Some faculty members actively resist distance education.

In what larger context do instructional design decisions take place? Can we resolve the sometime contradictory advice of university consultants from the College, and the disciplines of curriculum and instruction, instructional design, and adult education?

Hopefully faculty involvement will work toward the provision of quality courses over the internet.

Change outstrips our best-laid plans. Of the items on the university plan several were accomplished ahead of schedule, others became irrelevant because the technology became outdated. (University of South Alabama)

John Sperling (1999, Spring) conveniently summarizes one end of the spectrum in his advocacy of publicly traded corporations that provide higher education. One major thrust of his approach is an application of the business principle that divides labor. Specialists design courses select content, present material, and grade papers. Does a grader have an incentive to provide for formative evaluation in a course? Professors are accustomed to looking for ways to improve their classes. A major emphasis of the Alliance ACE "Principles of Good Practice" is on ongoing regular evaluations of effectiveness to used to continuously improve learning. There is a big difference between the Open University investment and commitment to systematic evaluation and development and promises of having a course up in six months.

Will web course designers from different backgrounds design different sorts of web pages? In this paper we have an opportunity to explore some of the differences between experienced professors, instructional designers, and administrators at different levels in the administration of higher education. A comparison of appropriate instructional design techniques in the traditional and web course may be made.

I will propose some hypotheses. There is some sense of real or assumed technological determinism. Some capabilities of technology are exercised without careful consideration of their curricular significance. Most readers have had an occasion to visit a web page or PowerPoint presentation full of sound and fury signifying little.

A resistant teacher notes that teachers have an opportunity to involve shy students in the classroom or some other effort of a traditional teacher to provide the best possible education. The advocate of WWW instruction notes that there are large lecture classes in the university or some teachers do not edit papers carefully. Instead of best practice the result of these fairly common discussion is a reduction of education to the lowest common denominator. Sadly, Sperling notes in "Drive Thru U" (Traub, 1997) that non-elite education will not be able to afford such luxuries as seminars. Most faculty members at our non-elite institution are anxious to provide the best possible education rather than the lowest common denominator. An advocate of web based instruction will note that there is no difference in standardized test results. A library colleague recently asked a student arguing for a rapid completion of his degree because of all his time constraints, "Do you want a degree or an education?"

One might guess that higher levels of administration focus on efficient delivery and need to be reminded of the breadth and depth of learning provided in the classroom. Different classes in different levels of specialization require different approaches. Accordingly, teachers might be expected to pay attention either to their discipline and their students. Some courses focus on content, others on the values or methods of disciplines. Introductory course require a mastery of common content, while advanced seminars ask students to individually investigate specialized disciplinary issues or methodological problems.

Frequently arguments and accreditations revolve around principles of good practice. Several are noted in our works cited. the College has its own principles. Our university has its own. A way to examine the healthy diversity of approaches to education is to compare these approaches. The Alliance ACE set holds up well because it embodies our history of alternative adult education. It asks that learners "take increased responsibility for control and direction of the learning process. It focuses on a learning society and learning communities. (Wilson, Qayyum, and Boshier, 1998). Education is understood to involve full disciplines, not merely content but also inquiry, skills, and the values of disciplines.

One Professor's Travel Through Web Land

After attending the first the College) seminar that introduced me to online education. I begin to think about the possibility of teaching an on-line course. This wasn't an easy paradigm shift since most of my computer knowledge is recent and has been in the area of word processing. However, several things helped me make the decision to offer a web course. First, the dean of my division heads up the distance education committee: therefore, distance education was a topic at most advisory meetings that I attended. He encouraged us to find courses that would be suitable for our division. Being eager to please, I begin to look at the ready-made courses offered by the book publishers. Simon and Schuster has partnered with the College to provide an extensive list which can be viewed at http://www.ssdl.com/products/catalog/catalog/index.html.

The needs of our adult student population provided the most convincing argument for offering a web course. Most of our students work full-time and have family and community responsibilities that are very time consuming. We just recently switched from quarters to semesters which means that our students need to take more courses each semester to graduate on schedule. Our division has always searched for innovative ways to offer courses to non-traditional students. This began with the establishment of the adult degree program in the 1980's, the addition of evening and weekend courses, a branch campus, and alternative ways to earn credits (ACE, professional secretaries exam, CLEP, military credit). More recently we were considering video courses. The university contract with the College came at a time when alternative scheduling was particularly important to our department. It occurred to me that web courses would be appealing to adult students who can take classes two nights a week but might add a third course if they could take it at home. With this realization, I became determined to add a web course to our department offerings.

Unfortunately, the courses that I presently teach were not ready-made web courses. Therefore, I choose to design a human development course that is commonly taken by our students and is included in the general education social science electives university-wide. So my adventure began.

The second meeting with Real Education, for serious web course developers, was somewhat difficult for me. Many other participants seemed more familiar with the web terminology. While others were asking technical questions, I was asking presenters to define words like streaming, webliography, and threaded discussion. They were very helpful, but I felt overwhelmed (and slightly incompetent) at this point.

By the third meeting, I had read *How to Design, Develop, and Teach An Online Course* (Real Education, 1999), had grasped the big picture, and felt more comfortable. I was actually working on-line designing my course. I was on my way! Since that meeting, I have been working alone preparing mini-lectures, homework assignments, and discussion questions while trying to work out some of the problems that I think we are having making the shift from a lecture course to a web course. Some of these problems are:

- Getting a mental picture of how students will see my course.
- How to integrate threaded discussion. How do I ask questions so that the students can all participate and add to the quality of the discussion?
- How to give exams.
- How do I remain part of the student's world throughout the semester?
- Adding audio

I have spent a great deal of time this summer designing the course. I have found the College personnel to be responsive to my questions and quite helpful with technical aspects of the course. In addition, several sources have provided pedagogical guidance (*Guiding Principles for Distance Learning*, 1996; *Online Learning at the University of South Alabama*, 1999). Tomei (1999) was helpful in providing a summary of the pros and cons of distance learning for adults so that I have a clear understanding of adult student concerns. Also, I have tried to incorporate the web course features that Tomei (1999) has found to be most appealing to adult students such as clear sequencing of materials, self-paced assignments week to week, interactive exercises, and practical applications of learning experiences.

I have submitted all my material to the College to place on-line (this is part of the service they provide). Some professors prefer to work on line and set up the course materials themselves. This approach gives one a real sense of control over the course. It was fun to do this in the third meeting, but it is very time consuming so I opted to let the College earn their fee.

This course will be offered for the first time in the Spring 2000 semester. I know that I have a lot to learn about teaching a web course and much of this will be learned after students sign up of the course. Only through the experience will I be able to "work out the bugs" and make this course a high quality web course. I expect to learn a great deal and to experience teaching in a new and exciting way.

Assessment of Faculty and Student Needs

Pedagogy in higher education is changing rapidly due to the influx of web-based instruction. Although distance education has existed since the advent of the postal system, this new medium of anywhere-anytime education in hyperspace creates additional challenges and opportunities for both the professorate and the learners. This venture in webland can create quite a quandary without a new educational paradigm grounded in sound instructional design principles. "To understand our paradigms, we must understand ourselves." (Dills and Romiszowski, 1997, p. 13).

To help address this virtual learning environment change and begin to understand the instructional paradigms, the Distance Education Task Force of an urban university requested that a *Systematic Needs Assessment* be conducted to research the current and future university resources, as well as faculty and student perceptions of needs. Dr. Susan Tucker agreed to lead the research team consisting of Denise Flowers, a doctoral candidate and doctoral students in the Instructional Design and Development program who were currently enrolled in the Needs Assessment class for the Spring 1999 term.

The Needs Assessment was grounded in Rossett's (1987) model emphasizing the identification of optimals and actuals and (Tucker and Dempsey, 1991) perception-based semiotic three box paradigm. This model places emphasis on the context, process, and output issues of an organization by asking key informants perceptions and negotiating research questions.

Instructional design principles necessitate beginning with a systematic needs assessment prior to any preparation for training or instruction (Gagne, Briggs, and Wager, 1992 and Rossett, 1987). Therefore, in order to address the main questions, interviews and meetings were conducted with the Distance Education Task Force chair and university administration. After final negotiations, interviews with deans, chairs, key informant faculty, focus groups, and formative evaluations of survey instruments for faculty and students, the study was ready for university-wide dissemination.

At this point in the university's venture into hyperspace, the administration elected to discontinue the university-wide surveys to faculty and a stratified random sample of students and let each dean decide his college's participation. The College of Continuing Education's Adult Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS) division decided to modify the student questionnaire to more uniquely reflect their students' needs to help design and accommodate adult learners' trip into webland.

The surveys were anonymously distributed to AIS students in the Spring and Summer 1999 classes to help determine the perceived needs and willingness for adult students to change to a web environment. To help design effective instruction via distance, Hanson, et al (1997) cited Holmberg's assumptions for "essential teaching principles of distance education." Holmberg (cited in Hanson, 1997, p. 12) emphasized that teaching be interactive, emotionally involving, pleasurably motivating, contain student participation in decision-making, and involve two-way didactic traffic between the learner and instructor.

As a part of learner analysis, the AIS Web-Based Instruction (WBI) Student Survey addressed these issues.

A key issue to the AIS faculty was diminishing web dropouts. Some major survey questions address the familiarity of the students to computer use, Internet use, and general WBI needs to help in student preparation and help the diffusion and acceptance of the web environment. The conclusive survey theme asked "What are the technological and self-perceived support needs of adult students in web environments?" Hanson, et al (1997) offers Keegan's hypotheses to help in program design to address these needs by emphasizing that reintegrating teaching acts must take place in distance environments. This reintegration takes place by recreating the interaction of the teacher and learner and linking learning materials to learning (Hanson, et al., 1997). This can be facilitated by the use of "telephone tutorials, on-line computer communication, comments on assignments by tutors or computers, teleconferences, etc." Linking the students with quality scholarly information will also enhance reintegration.

The survey items addressed this issue by asking for specific student needs for the use of e-mail, student interaction, on-campus meetings with professors and/or students, chat rooms, and on-line advising. General demographic and administrative items were asked on the self-perceptions of the changing role of the student, attitude toward WBI, readiness for WBI, use of web for scholarly information, willingness to pay additional technical fees, and interest in complete web-based programs. Correlations and disaggregation of data by demographic groups will be studied in more detail for further design refinement. Aggregate frequency and descriptive statistics for some of the major questions are as follows:

Web-Based Instruction Student Survey 1999 – Abbreviated Results

Male	32%	Age:	21-24	4.8%	n=125
Female	68%		25-29	18.5%	
			30-39	25.0%	
			40-49	39.5%	
			50 +	12.1%	

Computer Use:

Computer Ownership-Internet Capable	61.5%
Planning To Purchase-Internet Capable	23.0%
Own Computer With No Internet	8.2%
Don't Own, No Plans To Own Soon	5.7%
Own Computer, Not Capable of Internet	1.6%

Internet Use:

Participation in WBI (at least 50% Web)	Yes	4.1%
	No	95.9%
E-mail Account	Yes	71.8%
	No	28.2%

Benefits of WBI (Above 50%)	Mark All That Apply
More Flexible Scheduling	82%
Less Travel and Car Expenses	71%
Continuous Access To Course Materials	68%
Links To Library and Research Resources	66%
Saving Time If No Onsite Class Meetings	66%

WBI Needs: Mark All That Apply

Additional Training Needs Before Enrolling in WBI courses:

Keyboarding	17%	Taking Tests Online	31%
Word Processing	16%	Chat Room	22%
Egroups/Webboards	31%	Learn On My Own	23%
Web Navigation	40%	Time Management	27%
Scholarly Information	41%	e-mail	17%
None	14%		

WBI Courses Affect On Perception of Role of Student Mark All That Apply

No Change	16%	More Time	8%
More Self-Discipline	52%	Less Time	20%
More Control Over Learning	44%	Decrease Social Interaction	38%
Student Collaboration	11%	More Work	6%
Time Management	41%		

Willingness To Pay Extra Fees

Yes	52.6%	No	47.4%

Readiness To Enroll In WBI

Now	52.5%	Summer 00	11.7%
Spring 00	24.2%	Never	11.7%

Total Web-Based Program

Ready for it	30.9%	Later	32.7%	Not at all	36.4%

Web-Based Instruction Mark All That Apply

Frightens Me	18.8%	Comfortable For Me	37.5%	Is Not For Me	10.2%
Excites Me	51.6%	Doesn't Interest Me	10.9%		

Administrative and faculty interviews indicated various levels of expertise and resistance of web use. Novices and laggards were apprehensive and reluctant. Few refused to agree to participate in the university's move into the web environment, while the majority of the key informant faculty were currently using the web to post syllabi, FAQ (frequently asked questions), lecture notes and assignments, and sample activities and exams.

Key issues with faculty were intellectual property rights, incentives, tenure issues with academic research and publications, release time (due to the tremendous preparation), class limits, lack of training, "canned courses," and online testing. Responses ranged from no concern from administration to complete frustration with the many undecided issues. The majority of the interviewees suggested a centralized Distance Education Center and policies for the university with allowance for nuances within each college. All of the colleges chose to participate in the first or second round of WBI except one. This was viewed by the other college faculty as a deterrent to the change to a web environment due to the diminished web course selection for students. Two graduate schools (Instructional Design and Business) were preparing for complete web programs.

Faculty perceptions of constraints to WBI ranged from staff development, lack of technology support, losing touch with students, additional faculty to handle additional students and student interactions, transfer credit issues, to lack of formal policies. Training was requested in all major areas related to WBI – technical, design, assessment, and time management.

The vision of Distance Education ranged from movement to complete programs seeking new student markets to helping the current students better handle the demands of academia, work, and family. The overall university vision was not clearly articulated by the individuals. Indicating a need for more planning and discussion to enhance the diffusion to help facilitate the change to WBI.

Results suggests that the university and the AIS department currently address the following:

1. Design and develop support systems for students and faculty (printed, phone, physical, and on-line helps during the initial phase).
2. Alternative classes for student and faculty choice – do not force only WBI .
3. Plan for on-campus interaction with faculty and student or class.
4. Provide training in finding and citing "scholarly" information on the web.
5. Create a distance education division to write policy, monitor quality, train, and recruit faculty.
6. Create on-campus and/or on-line seminars for developing information literacy (evaluating and discerning scholarly information) and time management/self-discipline.
7. Design and develop marketing plans to begin to notify former students (stop-outs) and create new markets.
8. Collaborate with Instructional Designers for initial design and revisions.

Many needs were identified for changing to a web environment. Constant evaluation and monitoring of psycho-educational and training needs will help facilitate an iterative and enriching learning environment provided that administration, faculty, and students continue to communicate. Reintegration based on learning principles and theory (Keegan, as cited in Hagan, 1997) and following instructional design principles will also enhance the adoption and diffusion (Ely, 1997) of the web-based instruction to allow for more adult access to higher education and training.

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FacOnLine
On-line Orientation for New Adjunct Faculty at Empire State College – Center for Distance Learning

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Distance learning, through print and web-based course delivery, has grown exponentially in recent years in response to the needs of adult learners. This diverse group of students pursues higher learning and degrees for a variety of reasons. As adults with competing demands of work, family and community responsibilities, attendance at regularly-scheduled, on-site classes — with little or no flexibility — may be impossible. Many cannot even choose to attend flexible, adult centered programs which require seminar or personal meetings. Nevertheless, these learners expect — and deserve — a high-quality academic experience.

Increased demand for access and flexibility in college-level learning has increased the competition among distance learning institutions along with the need to take a hard look at what we do and how we do it. Adult learners — no longer limited to local study options — can now "shop around", comparing programs and prices. The adult learner has, in essence, become an informed "customer."

While this terminology is not embraced by the academic community, those of us in adult education might want to at least consider the concept of "customer service" if we plan to serve adult learners in this rapidly changing academic environment. Thinking about our "customers" can be the impetus for the design of student services and ongoing faculty development:

- *Who is the student we wish to serve?*
- *What is she seeking in an academic program?*
- *What is he seeking in services and development programs?*
- *How can we use technology for ease of access and cost effectiveness while continuing to provide a high-quality academic experience for a diverse group of individual adult learners?*

This paper will present three examples of best practices in the ongoing design of student services which reflect on the student as "customer."

In distance and adult education, the faculty member is usually the person who has the most impact and the strongest relationship with students. Retention research tells us that creating a connection between students and faculty is the best way to encourage student success and satisfaction. Our first best practice example documents an approach to faculty development online. The second example of best practices is the design of an online student writing center which begins with the adult learner. Finally, we describe the overall approach to the design of student services via a Virtual Student Center.

FacOnLine is an online orientation and discussion available on the Internet. It is available to every new adjunct faculty through an ISP (Internet Service Provider). FacOnLine is designed to provide adjuncts who are new to Empire State College's Center for Distance Learning with **"Best Practices,"** the information needed to become successful in helping CDL's adult learners acquire the information and master the skills covered in the CDL course offerings.

Three times per year, CDL offers about 150 course titles. About 1,000 students register each term. In order to deliver these courses to a growing number of students, CDL depends upon the talents of over 180 adjunct faculty each term.
Their backgrounds vary:

- o Many part-time adjunct faculty work full- or part time at other colleges or universities, or in the public and private school systems;
- o Many part-time adjunct faculty work in business or not-for-profit agencies, and bring a wealth of experience to their work with CDL;

- Some part-time adjunct faculty have retired from full-time positions, but enjoy the challenge and satisfactions of working with adult learners as they pursue their educational goals.

In the past, CDL has conducted an on-site Orientation Session for new adjunct faculty prior to the beginning of each term. The purpose of this meeting was to explain and expand upon the use of the Adjunct Faculty Handbook as a resource for their new assignment, and to:

1. help new adjunct faculty develop a sense of working with adult students, focusing on the similarities and differences from traditional students. This includes a sensitivity to the pressures that adult students find in incorporating "education" into lives which may already be full of work, family responsibilities, community activities, and pursuit of other interests.
2. help new adjunct faculty understand and participate in the ESC/CDL administrative and support systems. To explain, for example, the information on the Class Lists at the beginning of the term and the forms used to inform CDL about changes in student information. It would also include the means used for the adjunct faculty to communicate with students about feedback on assignments, and the final evaluation of the student's work at the end of the term.
3. help adjunct faculty who are new to ESC/CDL begin to develop some sense of "connectedness," or community, among themselves, and with the CDL full-time faculty and support staff, both of which have always been represented in the New Tutor Orientation Sessions.
4. To begin to establish the lines of communication necessary for follow up during the first term, and in succeeding terms. These lines of communication should work in both directions, and can be initiated either by the adjunct faculty member, or by someone in the CDL community.

The concept is fine, but it has not always worked in practice for several reasons:

1. Not all new adjunct faculty could attend the single session when it was scheduled each term because of other time commitments or because of distance from Saratoga Springs.
2. Make-up sessions, held privately, or on the phone were difficult to arrange and time-consuming to conduct in a one-on-one environment.
3. Since an increasing number of adjunct faculty are recruited from outside the Capital District area, (Albany-Saratoga Springs, NY), this precludes attendance.
4. Follow up during the term was difficult, spotty, and responsive only to "problems." Follow up became "fire-fighting," rather than true support.

FacOnLine uses the format and technology of other courses presented on the Internet through the SUNY Learning Network (SLN), so faculty get to become online learner themselves.

There are three "sections" of the presentation. At the left is Orientation and Syllabus, in the center are the four modules arranged according to the "flow" of the work of the adjunct faculty throughout the term, and at the right are three sections with general information to encourage dialogue during the term.

The section called "Orientation and Syllabus" which includes some of the content from the Adjunct Faculty Handbook about the nature of our students, and how they learn.

Welcome
Overview
Why are we doing this?
Suggested Readings and References
Same Tutor Letter
Tutoring Responsibilities
Students with "writing" difficulty
Contact information
Who's who at CDL
Your Next Steps

The four modules in the center of the Internet "Home Page" for this discussion are arranged according to the time line of the development course.

- o Getting Started — Covers the pre-term information and activity, plus the activity of the first few weeks.
- o On-Going Communications during the term — Feedback to students about assignments, student information updates to be passed on to CDL, communications with CDL faculty, support staff, and the student's advisor when indicated.
- o Mid-term activity — The Mid-term report from adjunct faculty to CDL, timing and purpose.
- o The End is in Sight! — writing the narrative course evaluation, final reporting of course outcomes.

Information at the right side of the Home Page is designed to facilitate the flow of information and dialogue within the group of new adjunct faculty, and with the staff and faculty at CDL.

- o Meet your Colleagues — A chance for each new adjunct faculty to introduce himself/herself, and to talk a bit about background and experience in working with adults, and in the academic discipline of the adjunct faculty.
- o Shared References — Each participant is encouraged to submit references to texts, to articles, to web-sites, or to any other references that the individual feels might be of interest to other "new" adjunct faculty.
- o Bulletin Board — This area is provided for open, unstructured discussion which may or may not pertain directly to the topic of "New Tutors." This area is sometimes called, "The Cafeteria," "The Teachers' Room," or "The Pub." It's a spot for those "out-of-class" discussions.

FacOnLine was designed and developed during the winter and spring of 1999. The project called for operations to be introduced as the means of orientation for new adjunct faculty for the fall term-1999. Since there were only three new adjunct faculty for the summer term (May-August), FacOnLine was made available on a pilot basis for the orientation of these three adjunct faculty for this term. Initial response to the concept was enthusiastic. Participation during the term has been somewhat disappointing, but as of mid-August when this paper is being prepared, it is felt that lack of critical mass may have a bearing. There are two issues:

1. Has FacOnLine been useful as a source of information for adjunct faculty, even though they may not have contributed actively in the discussion and requests for sample work? and,
2. if so, have the expectations of the design team been impractical, given the amount of work expected during the term?

A Feedback questionnaire has been prepared, and input will be solicited to aid in the redesign and implementation. A second course is now under development for those faculty who want to delve into the principles and theories related to adult development and distance education.

Writer's Complex

The Writer's Complex, an online writing lab for ESC students, was designed with the adult learner in mind. On a simple level, The Writer's Complex is a series of web pages that provide information about academic writing (e.g., what's a thesis sentence, how do I cite sources, how do I use commas). We found that many of our students who had been away from schooling for years needed basic information about writing concepts, processes, and particularly academic writing of the essay-thesis-support variety so that they had the tools to participate in written academic conversation. Additionally, many of our students (successful adults who write successfully on the job) were either shy or reluctant to ask for help with those tools. The existence of the online text filled a need for these students, especially as it also offers interaction through self-assessment exercises (e.g., a student can apply APA documentation in an exercise and match his or her answer with a sample on screen). Information and self-assessment, with the student directing his or her own route through these learning resources, are staples of any writing center. But The Writer's Complex also offers interesting possibilities for community-making among adult learners who are literally located around the world.

One way in which we have fostered community with the institution is to make it easy to link to a writing tutor, who is available to work with students on whatever writing project or issue they need to address. Student requests so far have spanned the range of possibilities, from asking how to use punctuation to working on multiple drafts of research papers. Non-writing faculty who are online are increasingly seeing the possibilities in having a text, space, and tutor available for their students to link with the institution for support. One faculty member reports that his students in the business and firefighting professions have found the Complex very useful; he intends to make links to it from his online course. In addition to linking students with writing faculty, our hope is that we can use this space to create a community of writers, students talking about actual writing issues, experiences, and texts.

Boquet, in a 1999 article on the history of writing centers, admires the way in which an electronic writing center "exceeds its space... exceeds its methods," "does away with the script for the how-to-write-a-research-paper session... and insists on the less predictable but potentially more productive conversations which wander, circle, and return again to the point where they began. This is not a failing; it is instead a part of the process, the nature of scholarly inquiry" (478-479). We wanted to embrace this concept of unconstructed space within the design of The Writer's Complex through "Corridor Talk," a space initially conceived of as housing students' thoughts about writing, writing samples, comments about and personal reactions and relationships to the online text. Corridor Talk snakes through the plan of The Writer's Complex, and the corridor is accessible immediately from any room. As it has evolved, though, Corridor Talk has verified part of Bouquet's vision and has become a space that has exceeded a focus on writing, a space for students to ask questions about whatever they need answered. Recent discussion has dealt with the code word for the writing tutor, experiences in a course in early childhood education, and building a web page for ESC students.

The issue — and the task — that confronts The Writer's Complex now is how to help all members of the academic community become aware of the possibilities that exist for the type of inquiry and discussion that Boquet envisions. Spaces in the Complex could, most literally "[make] visible the ways writers and readers have always dealt with text...emphasizing student awareness of individual writing processes...[and enabling] unconscious mental processing [to become] more visible" (Takayoshi 247). In the future, we hope to foster more student-faculty-text interaction which in turn can foster a community of writers who read and talk — through writing — about the process of writing and thus become active participants in that community.

Virtual Student Services

Empire State College as an institution devoted to individualized student services has also moved to the creation of services which are available to students when they need them and not only through their mentors or offices. The Center for Distance Learning approaches the design of services based on in-depth understanding of student need. Through the educational planning process, we understand much about adult students' motivation, goals, background, and access to technology. As more learners have access, we have moved our delivery services to the web. In this process, we have asked ourselves some serious questions about why and now we provide student services.

In 1997 ESC began developing a Virtual Student Services Center. The goal was to provide support to online students and to identify new services most critical to student success and retention. We have conducted focus groups with our students and development meetings with faculty from around the college to create the Center. Resources which have been developed include:

- Virtual Library — research database and full text articles
- Writer's Complex — student development resource, a project developed by writing faculty before the start up of the Center (described earlier)
- Learning Communities — student discussion and meeting areas
- Online academic advising
- Online registration and bookstore online inquiry
- Student Ambassador and Student Voices to create a personal environment for prospective students.
- Educational Planning course
- Student Financial Services
- Career Planning Resources
- Assessment Center Services

These projects have been developed in three month phases with follow-up development in subsequent phases. Student feedback on usage from faculty and students will be shared.

Conclusion

Creating services which are customer focused will enhance the quality of the adult student experience. We also believe it will help faculty to have the time for more individualized work with students. One of our students, Emily Weiner, wrote in a New York Times article in 1996 that online learning needs to be more than a collection of courses (Weiner, 1996). ESC has made significant progress toward the goal of an online comprehensive set of services.

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Connecting the "Person" with the "Learner:" Student and Faculty Learning Experiences with Web Courses at SUNY Empire State College

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A fear we hear expressed again and again among adult educators is that distance, and especially computer-based, learning is "cold," or somehow lesser in its ability to help students connect with the information of the course, as it lacks a "personal element." At SUNY Empire State College, which traditionally individualizes instruction, we are increasingly attracting students who choose to learn online. Students who take online courses also want to continue taking online courses; student interest and re-enrollment in online courses is high. As educators working with adult students, we strive to connect the person with the learner through incorporating a constructivist approach to learning in our courses.

Online courses, like all of the courses at Empire State College, focus strongly on the student. Online courses are often structured so that they start out by asking directly about students' experiences. For example, a first assignment in a course might be to write about one's own relationship with the subject matter of the course, one's own goals, interests, and even fears in pursuing the course. Not only does this provide the faculty with an understanding of the context in which each student is learning, it also provides the chance for students to start relating to one another as they read about others' experiences and learn of their similarities. The focus on the student extends through online courses in many forms, from offering a lot of choice in type or subject matter of assignments to structuring an environment in which students choose the type of course work they wish to do at certain places in the course. The point is that students are encouraged to link personally to the material; the material is not merely presented to them in a traditional top-down instructional mode.

In fact, most courses do not just present material in lecture format online, but are structured so that students actively participate in the learning. Many online courses are structured around discussion questions, case studies, or role-play situations that are integral learning activities for the course. Students do not just navigate learning materials online for a student-text relationship; they also are asked to relate to other students as they apply concepts to cases or course topics. The technology makes it possible for students at a distance to extend their own understanding of a topic by hearing others' perspectives. And an attempt is always made to relate cases and questions to real-world experience. Students in a policy course take on the roles of policy-makers, community members, etc., in a representative case. Students in a business writing course create documents that they really can use at work. Students in a course on stories and creative leadership analyze the stories that real product ads tell.

The faculty role, given the way in which courses are designed, is to facilitate student learning by guiding students to resources, interjecting questions, noticing similarities or differences in students' comments and approach, and summarizing main points of discussion. In fact, many faculty who teach online have learned to stay out of student discussions to a large extent, as long as the discussions are progressing well, as too-frequent faculty intervention can stop student participation.

Faculty also evaluate student learning through narrative evaluations based on criteria that are public, published within the course database, so that students know up front what is expected in terms of learning content and skills. Evaluation criteria serve an additional function as well; they provide a measure for students to assess their own learning and a means to structure that assessment. In addition to evaluation criteria, courses are often structured to ask students to reflect on both their immediate and broader learning experiences. Self-tests allow students to immediately see what they know and do not know, and self-tests often contain explanations and links to other resources to help students focus on information they need to master, thus enabling them to move through the material as their own needs dictate. At the end of the course, final assignments may ask students to comment on their actual learning in light of their initial learning goals, or circle back to an initial problem and discuss it again, from the perspective of the insights and understandings gained throughout the term.

The online environment allows courses to be discussion-based and student-focused, providing opportunities for collaborative as well as independent learning and, above all, student engagement with the course material in an individual way. The online environment also has the potential for creating more personal connections among students. We use a common course template that has space not only for background information and course material, but also for more personal communication. All participants in the course, students and faculty alike, are encouraged to introduce themselves to one another in a "Meet Your Classmates" section of the course. Students are encouraged to continue with personal, outside-of-class communication in a space called "Bulletin Board," where they can post any type of communication they choose. Bulletin Board conversations range from questions and comments about course work to personal chat about students' work, backgrounds, and interests. Virtually all pieces of the course are structured to help students connect with material and with each other in learning and personal environments.

One way of characterizing the experience of an online course is that of two opposite movements that occur along the same line. Students make the personal public, and faculty make the public personal. That is, students are asked to contribute their personal experiences, insights, and understandings to the public text of the course, while faculty then interpret those experiences, insights, and understandings back to the students collectively and individually. Faculty relate information and coursework to students' experiences to help them see connections, link students with one another in the conversation of the course, let students take control over the material and assignments and sometimes even the structure of the course, and give students control over how frequently and in what mode they communicate with faculty.

So — does this all work? No matter how sound the theory that underlies the structure of our online courses, are students actually connecting in fruitful ways with the material, and do they feel connected to one another as members of a learning community?

To gather some information about student perceptions of connectedness in online courses, we did a very small qualitative study that asked students in a fall, 1998, and summer, 1999, introductory composition course to answer direct questions about their feelings of connection to course materials and to other students in the course. Students generally responded strongly when asked how connected they felt to the online course material, commenting about how much the material related to their personal needs and interests. Reasons for feeling connected were that they could choose their own writing topics and they received personal attention from the faculty.

Some students commented on the need to feel more connected to faculty by having more immediate response — these students did not want to wait for the faculty person to log on in order to get responses or answers. The technology creates the expectation for immediate response.

Student response was much more varied — and much less strong — when asked how connected they felt to other students in the course. Most felt somewhat connected, and a few did not feel connected to other students at all. When asked to identify reasons for student connectivity, most students cited the fact that reviewing their classmates' writing made them connect with each other. Interestingly enough, only one student mentioned the "Meet Your Classmates" section of the course, where students are encouraged to introduce themselves and talk about their experiences, as a means of feeling connected with others. No students mentioned the "Bulletin Board" section which functions as a chat room for personal communication — although personal discussions did in fact occur during the semester. Students mostly restricted their comments about personal connections with other students to the context of the actual course work.

We are also learning more about students' reactions and perceptions to online learning through the student surveys completed at the end of each term.

Results of Student Surveys

Two different surveys were developed and distributed online and by mail by the Center for Learning and Technology (CLT) and the Center for Distance Learning (CDL) at SUNY Empire State College. The first survey was administered to students enrolled in online courses for the fall, 1998, term and was primarily focused on students' satisfaction levels with online courses in general. 120 out of approximately 600 students responded. The second survey was administered to students enrolled in spring, 1999, courses offered both as print-based, guided independent studies and as online courses. This survey primarily focused on students' differing perceptions of print-based courses versus online courses. 171 out of 691 responded and, of the respondents, 37 were students enrolled in online courses that term. Both surveys combined quantitative and qualitative measures, both Likert-type and open-ended questions. Our findings are reported below.

Interaction with instructor:

Four questions focused on students' perceptions of the effectiveness and/or importance of their interactions with their instructors and their sense of connectedness to the instructors. Students rated their perceptions of the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5 (strongly agree to strongly disagree):

- interaction with instructor was very important in relation to performance in course
- feedback from instructor was very important in relation to performance in course
- the instructor met students' overall expectations for the course
- students desired more interaction with their instructor.

Approximately 2/3 of the fall, 1998, cohort of students felt their instructors' online communications were effective while 24% were unsure of the effectiveness of online communications. In addition, 81% of the students also felt that the instructor's feedback on assignments was effective while 15% of students were unsure of the effectiveness of feedback. Moreover, 89% of ESC students felt that their instructor's overall performance was excellent or good while 7.5% were unsure. Table 1 shows the results of students' perceptions of their interaction or connectedness with the instructor.

Table 1
Students' Perceptions of Interaction with Instructor

	Fall 1998 (n = 120)	Spring 1999 (n = 37)
Interaction with instructor was very important and/or effective in relation to performance in course	64%	73%
Feedback from instructor was very important and/or effective in relation to performance in course	81%	70%
The instructor met students' overall expectations for the course	89%	70%
Students desired more interaction with their instructor	N/A	31%

In addition, the spring, 1999, students were also asked to describe their interactions with their instructors in an open-ended question. A summary of those findings follows in Table 2.

Table 2
Spring 1999 Cohort's Descriptions of Interactions with Online Course Instructor

	Fall 1998 (n=34)
Excellent / Very Interactive	41%
Good	8%
Average / Fair	13.5%
Very Little Interaction / Minimal	27%
No Interaction / Poor	2.7%

Interaction with other students:

When queried about their connectedness or interaction with other students, over 2/3 of the fall, 1998, cohort of students felt that the online discussions were important to their learning. The majority indicated that the discussions provided different perspectives, feedback, support, and the sharing of ideas. Students also felt that the discussions aided their understanding of the readings and helped them to "see the big picture." In contrast, a small minority of students found the online discussions to be of poor quality and/or hostile in nature (4%).

The spring, 1999, students were also asked about their perceptions of their learning and interaction with other students. Students rated their perceptions of the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5 (strongly agree to strongly disagree):

- interaction with other students was very important in relation to performance in the online course
- interaction with other students was very important in my learning experience as they offered me support and/or differing perspectives
- students desired more interaction with other students.

Table 3 shows the results of students' perceptions of their interactions with other students as well as their connectedness to fellow students.

Table 3
Students' Perceptions of Interactions with Other Students

	Fall 1998 (n=120)	Spring 1999 (n=37)
Interaction with other students was very important in relation to my performance in this course	67%	52%
Interaction with other students was very important in my learning experience as they offered me support and/or differing perspectives	67%	65%
Students' desired more interaction with other students	N/A	22%

A brief glance at students' reasons for taking online courses along with their perception of the benefits of online learning may put their responses about connectedness into perspective. The 37 students in the spring, 1999, cohort were asked an open-ended question about their reasons for taking online courses. 27% of the 34 who responded stated that interaction with others was a reason for enrolling in an online course. (Other reasons included the need to meet an education or degree requirement, 14%; personal interest or curiosity, 14%; and convenience/flexibility of format, 45%. Among the reasons reported for the fall, 1998, cohort (with some students reporting more than once) were the need to meet an education or degree requirement, 85%; to develop skills/knowledge for job, 41%; and personal interest, 26%.

Students in the fall, 1998, cohort were queried about the perception of the beneficial aspects of online courses. They provided 314 responses as follows:
(Note: students could respond more than once)

30% time or location flexibility
17% interesting content
14% student interaction
13% instructor assistance
12% web resources
11% enhanced learning environment
3% no benefits

Discussion

Based on these survey results, a small portion of students are enrolling in online courses because of the opportunities they provide for connection with other students and faculty, but once there, students do see some benefits to the opportunities for enhanced communication that these courses provide. (Students in the fall, 1998, cohort also saw some barriers, too — 12% of the 183 responses indicated that the instructor provided poor/untimely feedback and not enough interaction).

But the surveys raise important issues as well. One of the most obvious issues is student expectation for immediate response, which may account for about _ of the students in the spring, 1999, cohort feeling disconnected from the course instructor. If this is the most obvious issue, it is also one of the easiest to address. We are dealing with this issue in a number of ways, by increasing the use of self-assessments that provide immediate feedback as soon as the student submits the assessment, by "team-teaching" web courses so that the workload involved in responding daily (or more frequently) is shared by two or more instructors, and by creating clearer communications to students as to how frequently they can expect a response from the instructors. In keeping with our goal of encouraging students to learn from one another, the course structure provides students with a mechanism for posting questions and answers to help one another. As students become more comfortable with this approach, the need for the instructor to be the source of all answers is diminishing.

Another more difficult issue to address — because it is more abstract — is the "disconnect" that some students seem to feel between the personal and academic conversations of the course. Students' varied responses in the composition course survey, and student responses in the larger surveys, indicate that although they see student-to-student interaction as something important, they don't all value this type of connection as a means of learning. Perhaps we as a faculty need to model the communal nature of learning more fully — something that ESC faculty, trained in the one-to-one model of mentoring, may need to address. Or perhaps faculty need to participate more obviously as co-learners in the online courses. Maybe we need to draw more obvious linkages among students as we respond to their reflective discussions. One larger "perhaps," something we haven't really addressed as a faculty, is the need to plan for multiple approaches to course material in order to address students' different learning styles, something that's made possible in the online environment. This would require the creation of more complex, more richly dense course materials than we now have in order to give students a choice of routes through the learning of the course, and it may relax the focus on discussion as a means of learning.

We still have a lot to learn. We hope to learn by listening to and focusing on our students' experiences in order to extend the possibilities of online instruction to connect students and faculty as learners.

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